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Dharma of a Disciple

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Dharma of a Disciple



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Dharma of a Disciple

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

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Dedication tip-on

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Guru Tattwa

5 August 2010

An important event took place in Ganga Darshan in July 2010. On 25th July, we celebrated Guru Poornima, the day dedicated to guru. I had gone to Rikhiapeeth to participate in the program there. Prior to my departure on 15th July, Thursday, as per the tradition of this ashram, we conducted Guru Pooja at Gurupeeth, which is a humble memorial built at Ganga Darshan in honour of our guru, Sri Swami Satyananda. During the pooja, I lit a deepak, a small container in which the flame burns for about four hours at the most. After performing the pooja, I left for Rikhia.

The Gurupeeth in Munger is in a very secluded, isolated and protected place. The general residents of the ashram do not have access to that area. Only those who are appointed for its management and cleanliness go there, finish their duties and leave. The next day, on the 16th morning, I received a message that the *gyoti*, flame, is still burning. I did not pay much attention and simply thought that sometimes that may happen, it may continue to burn. On the 17th, the same news, the *gyoti* is still burning. I thought that somebody might have added oil and changed the wick. On the 18th – the *gyoti* is still burning. On the 19th – the *gyoti* is still burning. On the 20th – the *gyoti* is still burning. I asked the caretaker, “Why are you burning it all the time? It is supposed to burn only during the pooja, not every day.” The caretaker said, “I am not doing anything, I haven’t put oil, I haven’t



changed the wick.” Without being attended to at all, the jyoti was continuing to burn. Then I had a feeling that it would burn till the 25th, the day of Guru Poornima. It did burn till the 25th, plus some more.

On the 26th, I came back to Ganga Darshan. It was the first day of Sravan, the month dedicated to Shiva, and it was a Monday. I went to Gurupeeth for darshan and that was the last I saw the jyoti burning. On the 27th morning, it had gone off. So, from the 15th to the 26th, without changing the wick, without putting a drop of oil in the deepak, it continued to burn. Even when the doors and windows of Gurupeeth were closed and there was absolutely no movement inside the room, no wisp of air entering through any crack, the jyoti would flicker, as if somebody was there and making movements, causing it to flicker.

When I speak of this incident, people say it is a miracle, it is guru's grace. They call it an astounding event. I listen to all those remarks and think, "Is it really a miracle, is it really guru's grace, is it an astounding event? What is that power, the force, the shakti which made the jyoti burn for so many days without consumption of oil or burning of the wick?"

In the Old Testament of the Bible, there is the story of the revelation of Moses. At Mount Sinai, he has the experience of God. He has darshan of God in the form of a burning bush. The bush was burning, but it was not burning. The flames were rising all around the bush, but the bush itself was intact, untouched by the flames. That is how the Cosmic Spirit revealed itself to Moses.

I am not comparing that event with this incident, but I am giving an indication of the power which burned the deepak for so many days with the wick and the level of oil being intact. The fire is burning the wick, but the wick is not burning. The fire is burning the bush, but the bush is intact. What is that power, that presence? It is the sixth element: that which is beyond the five elements.

The presence of the sixth element is the *atma tattwa*, spirit element. We talk of the five elements or *tattwas*: earth, water, fire, air and ether, but beyond this, there is the sixth tattwa, which is the spirit. This element, the spirit, is inherent in all the five tattwas.

Guru tattwa

We are composed of five tattwas, and the spirit tattwa is inherent within us in a subtle form. However, we are not aware of the spirit tattwa. We are aware of the five sensorial tattwas which can be experienced, but not of the transcendental or spirit tattwa. Yet, we say there is atma, spirit, in everyone. We cannot recognize that spirit as the special sixth tattwa because it is not composed of earth, water, fire, air or ether. The spirit is the presence of life; it is the presence of knowledge. It is a part of paramatma, the supreme spirit.

The Shanti Mantra of the *Ishavasya Upanishad* states:

*Om poornamadah poornamidam poornaat poornamudachyate;
Poornasya poornamaadaaya poornameva avashishyate.*

That is full and this is full. Remove a part from the full, what you have removed is full, and what is left behind is full.

In mathematical language zero plus zero equals zero, zero minus zero equals zero, zero divided by zero equals zero, and zero multiplied by zero equals zero. The completeness, the fullness of life is God, and that is full, it is complete. The part which is emanating from God, in the form of spirit, inherent in each being, is also full. That spirit or atma in the real sense is the sixth element – called the guru tattwa. The atma tattwa, the spirit element is also called the guru tattwa. Why?

God is formless, infinite and ungraspable. Something which is infinite cannot be made finite. Something which is ungraspable cannot be grasped by the senses or the mind. However, its shakti, its power, has a role to play. What role or function does the power of God play in our life? Only one: of removing the darkness of life.

As we remove layers and layers of darkness, of *avidya*, ignorance, ahamkara and asmita, the 'I' identities, the 'I' associations, the light of the spirit shines brighter and brighter. As the covering of ignorance and inner darkness is removed and the light shines, there is growth and development at every level. At the mental and emotional levels there is greater maturity, at the physical level there is greater physical balance, at the spiritual level there is greater inner awakening. Everything grows together. Everything moves and progresses together.

God is often perceived as the power that controls the individual and the universe. That is a perception, a thought, but the important point is that it is a presence which is transcendental and infinite, and which is also visible and

finite. In the finite dimension, we have the experience of the transcendental shakti within us in the form of spirit. In the transcendental dimension, we experience that power as the cosmic spirit. The cosmic spirit is called God, and the individual spirit is called spirit. The great spirit is paramatma, and the individual spirit is atma.

Paramatma means the great spirit and *atma* means the contained spirit. Paramatma is the free spirit which is infinite while atma is contained, finite and bound. This bondage, however, is only of the senses and the extroverted mind; it is superficial, not internal. It is only related to the sensory expectations and desires, the mental, emotional and intellectual expectations and desires. It is the extroverted mind which defines the mental, physical, emotional and intellectual levels. The continuous interaction with sense objects is caused by the natural responses of the extroverted mind. In this state the open nature or the freeness of the spirit cannot be experienced. One remains confined to a limited role and experience of life. “Me and my family”, comfort and luxury, pain and suffering, achievement and loss – life revolves around these ideas only.

The senses bind and limit the expression of the mind. The removal of the veils is the removal of the influence of the senses from the mind and this makes the mind peaceful and luminous. The more veils you put on your mind with stresses, anxieties, criticisms and negativities, the more lethargic, dull, negative and depressed it becomes and loses its clarity.

The spirit, which is the guru tattwa, is beyond the mind. The cosmic spirit, paramatma, is complete, full. The extension of that paramatma, in the form of the little lights burning for seventy or eighty years, is atma. That is the guru tattwa. That which separates from the full, yet manifests itself as full is the guru tattwa. It is an omnipotent energy and if it wants to manifest itself, it can do so in any form. When it wants to manifest itself in a way that can be grasped by the ordinary mind, it makes matter its medium. Moses saw the burning bush and here we saw the guru shakti in the form of

a flame which remained lit for eleven days. It indicated that a flame does not burn due to oil or wick, but due to a special energy.

Guru is not a person; it is a force, a power. In Christianity they say that the Christ-consciousness descended upon Jesus, which means that a higher consciousness unfolded in the graspable mind of the individual and Jesus became the Christ. In the same manner, a person becomes enlightened when that guru tattwa, the spirit-awareness is realized, when the spirit descends.

The descent of the spirit does not mean something coming from top into you. 'Descent of spirit' may not even be the appropriate phrase. It is the ascent of consciousness which realizes the permanent existence of the spirit and makes the individual enlightened.

God is complete; therefore, the guru tattwa is complete in the form of spirit and those within whom the guru tattwa awakens become the physical gurus. Thus, the Shanti Mantra of the *Ishavasya Upanishad* is indicative of the God who is unmanifest, infinite and eternal and also the guru who is manifest, who can be seen and who is as complete as God.

Two trends of life: artha and kama

Many civilizations have come and gone on earth. If we look at the global social environment of the past and present we find that most civilizations have only followed two practices in their society: education and vocation.

In the early days of our life we educate ourselves. Once we are educated, we enter into a profession and live the rest of our life as that professional person. If you want to become a doctor you study, acquire knowledge, and after completing your studies and acquiring the degree, you become a medical practitioner, a doctor. That becomes your identity for life. Even if you are eighty years old, people will still call you a doctor. Even if you are dead, people will say the doctor died. So, the two major trends in life are education and vocation. This applies globally.



In our tradition we call these two practices *artha* and *kama*. You want to become something in life so you study. You make the effort and acquire the necessary skills to become that. That is fulfilment of a desire, *kama*. You are fulfilling a desire in relation to your life whether you want to become a doctor, engineer, sannyasin, truck-driver, gardener, farmer, electrician, plumber or scientist. Your vocation is the application of your education; you begin to apply what you know. When you started off you were green; you did not have much knowledge, you had only passed out of college. However, through participation, involvement and implementation of knowledge, you acquire expertise in the area. That becomes the medium and means for acquisition of further prosperity and wealth, or *artha*.

The entire global society has, since the beginning of time, followed these two systems only, *kama* and *artha*. The thoughts and ideas which projected any other belief were often negated.

In the early days people used to think that the earth was flat and when Copernicus said the earth is round, everybody called him mad. In the beginning people used to think that the solar system revolves around the earth, but Galileo said the earth revolves around the static sun. These instances indicate that many societies conditioned their existence according to certain given ideas or beliefs. Anybody who challenged those or provided a new understanding was not looked upon with favourable eyes. Similarly, as the spiritual dimension was not known – nobody could see or experience it or have any commercial gain from it – it was negated.

The global society was based on the idea that our existence is limited to our life in this world. Therefore, we must strive to live a comfortable life and fulfil all our desires. This was the reason why education and vocation became the two driving trends of society. However, in India, the *rishis*, the sages, said that apart from these two, incorporate two more trends in your life: dharma and moksha. They said that the four efforts together complete a human life.

Guide on the path of dharma and moksha

Dharma means reflection to abide by the inherent and highest truth in every situation, and *moksha* means transcendence of suffering in life. So the rishis in India gave two more directions to the society in this country. The proponents of dharma and moksha became the gurus while the proponents of artha and kama became teachers, *shikshaks*. This is something you need to understand very clearly.

One does not become a guru by sitting on a stage and giving a nice lecture. The guru principle is something else. The objective of the guru is to take you through the path of dharma and moksha while the objective of a teacher is to provide you with the necessary skills to survive in society. Therefore, the teacher cannot be a guru just as a doctor cannot be an engineer; the roles are different.

The word guru is only meant to be used in the context of dharma and moksha. What is the meaning of dharma? Why

does the guru teach dharma? Dharma today is translated as religion, but it does not mean that. The word religion has come from western society, but the word dharma does not mean religion. *Dharma* means the eternal and inherent response, commitment or duty. In the scriptures it has been said, *Dharayate iti dharmah* – “The virtues or positive qualities that you hold and express in your life naturally are called dharma.”

Dharma is seen from three perspectives. The first component of dharma is *jnana*, knowing, understanding, reflecting or analyzing what is good, what is not good; what is appropriate, what is not appropriate; what is white, what is black; what is right, what is wrong; what is just, what is unjust. To cultivate a deeper knowledge is the first component of dharma. This knowledge must define for you the appropriateness of life so that inappropriateness is rejected. That is the first level of dharma: cultivation of positive attributes and removal of negative attributes.

In order to achieve the first level of dharma, its second component became *upasana*, personal practice. Mantra, meditation, anushthana, all these are part of upasana. Thereafter, in order to create a social impact, to have social acceptability and not contradict the traditions of society, rituals became part of upasana. That is the third level of dharma.

The first level of dharma is cultivation of knowledge, and this is where the role of the guru becomes necessary. How can we cultivate knowledge? We don't have the necessary skills. Even if we read books, we cannot understand what is written in them. To cultivate knowledge, understanding and awareness of the right and the wrong, the appropriate and the inappropriate, a guru is needed.

A guru is also needed for the attainment of moksha. Moksha does not mean emancipation; that is its last definition. In the beginning, moksha means overcoming the suffering and pain, the stress and strife of life. The moment you decide to disconnect yourself from the stress and strife

of life and search for peace and tranquillity within, you are on the path of moksha. Transformation of the gross nature and attainment of the higher nature of mind, so one is free from the bondages of the senses and society, is moksha. So, those who teach you the skills to survive in society are tutors, teachers, lecturers or professors. They teach you the skills of kama and artha. While those who teach you the skills of dharma and moksha are gurus.

Satguru

The guru tattwa within is known as satguru. One of the qualifications of God is truth, *sat*, another is bliss, *ananda*, and the third is *chit*, cosmic awareness. The first component of God, *sat*, manifests in life in the form of atma or soul, and thus the guru tattwa is the satguru inside. That is one definition.



Another definition of satguru is chief of a tradition, such as Swami Sivananda. Our guru followed the path shown to him by Swami Sivananda. We are following the path shown to us by our guru, but that path is also Swami Sivananda's path. So, the chief of our tradition is Swami Sivananda. It is his teachings that we are trying to live. In our *parampara*, tradition, he is the satguru.

Just as the satguru is within everyone in the form of God, in the external tradition the first person who is the guide and whose directions the later generations follow is known as the satguru.

Destiny's choice

When we look at the life of our guru, Swami Satyananda, we find that his life was always guided. He followed a destined path. Gurus are not made by choice, but by destiny.

If people come to a guru and are trained by him, they do not all become gurus in their own right when the guru is no more. Nobody can become a guru by declaring "I am a guru." Those who say this are the worst hypocrites of society. Gurus are destined people; they have a special destiny, a special samskara, a special karma, a special purpose and mission. Due to that special destiny, the family cannot hold them back, society cannot hold them back.

You may have heard the story of Shankaracharya who became a sannyasin at the age of eight. He rejected the appeals of his mother to stay back, to study and work at home. The love of his mother could not hold him back. The norms of society could not hold him back. The rules of sannyasa could not stop him. He was initiated at the age of eight. Now, is that a personal choice or is it destiny?

Ramana Maharshi was eight years old when he was given a few rupees to go to the market and buy vegetables for dinner. He did not go to the market, went to the railway station, sat on a train, disembarked near Arunachal and never went back. Was that his choice or was it destined?

Swami Sivananda had a thriving practice in the Malaya Islands, but the spiritual pull was so strong that he gave everything away, came to Chennai, gave his luggage to one of his friends, did not even go back to his parental home, sat on a train and travelled up to the Himalayas. Was that his choice or destiny?

Swami Satyananda had high meditative experiences from the age of six. His family or society could not hold him back. Was that his destiny or his choice? Similarly, there are many people who have come to the path of spiritual life because they had no choice, it was destined.

You have not come because of destiny; you have come because of your choice. You have come because you chose to be

here. There was no compulsion in your life. You like the place, the person, the system, so you decide to stay. You may stay here for one year, twelve years, twenty years or thirty years. When you want to leave, you can. This kind of fluctuation indicates that it is not destined, it is your choice.

A family lives close by, in another town, and has been very closely associated with the ashram from its very beginning. We know three generations of the family. They come here often, participate in every function and program, one hundred percent devoted and dedicated. One day, the son decided to leave home and take sannyasa. So he came here and said, "Swamiji, I want to take sannyasa, I want to stay in the ashram." I said fine, I did not suspect anything because I knew the family well. The boy started living here and undergoing the ashram routine with the idea that he will take sannyasa. After about ten days, his parents arrived and they were furious. They said, "Why have you come here? You know that we are organizing your wedding. Come back, get married, look after our shop and house." They did not allow him to stay. They dragged him back. At home, they locked him up in a room till the day of the wedding. Now, is this destiny or choice? He wanted sannyasa, but sannyasa was not in his destiny. He did not want to marry, but marriage was in his destiny.

There are many people here, especially the young ones, who want to get married, but it is not their destiny. There are many sannyasins who, after spending some time here, think, "I wonder how marital life would be! I have had the experience of sannyasa life, I wonder how marital life would be!" In fact, some poorna sannyasins have come to me and said, "Swamiji, can you reinitiate me into karma sannyasa?"

So, gurus are people with a special destiny and when that destiny has to be fulfilled, nothing can stop their march or progress. The fetters of the world are not strong enough to bind them, the maya of the world is not strong enough to bind them. But those who are not destined to explore the spiritual life are always pulled away into material life. This has been my observation.

It is destiny which prepares a person for God's work, and that is when the guru tattwa awakens in him or her. The person does not even realize this, but the fragrance and light of the guru tattwa attracts people and they see them as guru. However, such a person will never see themselves as guru; they will see themselves only as a disciple. If a person thinks they are a guru, their ego will destroy them, and even God will not be able to save them. But if even a siddha perceives himself as a disciple, his ego will never get the better of him.

Four types of gurus

In the tradition, gurus are categorized in four groups. One is the *vidwan guru*, knowledgeable guru, the second is the *yogi guru*, the third is the *tantric guru*, and the fourth is the *brahmanishtha guru*, the enlightened guru.

The first category of guru is the *vidwan* or *jnani* guru. There are many *jnanis*: the intellectuals, the knowledgeable people. It is not necessary that they be a *sadhaka*, a practitioner, just as a university professor can train students to become a scientist but is not an Einstein himself. The teacher of Einstein was not Einstein. In the same manner, the knowledgeable guru is able to impart knowledge, but he is not the scientist who has gone through the process himself. He can tell you what is right and what is not, but it is not necessary for him to live those precepts. Usually, such gurus are public figures. They give lectures and programs, classes, seminars and conventions.

The second category is the *yogi guru*. A *yogi guru* is not a yoga teacher. You are a yoga teacher, but you are not a *yogi guru*. A *yogi guru* is a person who has achieved the highest state of yoga in life. What is the highest state of yoga in life? According to Patanjali, it is *chitta vritti nirodhah*. One who has been able to control the modifications of the mind, whose mind does not vascillate, who is one-pointed, centred, balanced and peaceful, and emanates that. A *yogi guru* is going through a process of learning and teaching at the same time.

The third is the tantric guru, the siddha. He is able to experience the cosmic energy manifesting in the body. One who is able to connect the body with the cosmic energy is the tantric guru. He can invoke that energy in matter; he can manifest the unmanifest, he is able to control the Shiva and Shakti elements.

The fourth category is the brahmanishtha guru and there are very few such gurus. They are people in whom the energy of God is fully awakened. They are not called avatars, but they can be called small avatars, *kanishtha avatara*. The brahmanishtha guru has nothing to do with the world, but forever remains in communion with God. He can see God all the time before him just as we can see each other. Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Ramana Maharishi were the kind of people who belong to this category.

Swami Sivananda was also a brahmanishtha guru. He was an enlightened person. He knew everything. Once I asked Sri Swamiji, "Swami Sivanandaji has written so many books and given references to so many literatures and scriptures in his writings. When did he have time to read them? Did he ever read any book?" Sri Swamiji said, "No, he never read any book, but the title and content of every book was on the tip of his tongue. He would write without any crosses, without any changes or editing. What he used to write was final. He was a person of the calibre in whom the knowledge manifested spontaneously." That is the brahmanishtha guru. One who does not need to read anything, but knows everything.

While Swami Sivananda was a brahmanishtha guru, Sri Swamiji was a tantric guru. He was able to explode the energies, invoke the shaktis and bring about a greater transformation just through the force of his presence, his being. In fact, Sri Swamiji as a sadhaka moved from level to level. At first, when he was teaching yoga, he was a yogi guru. He became a tantric guru when he involved himself in the higher vedic sadhanas. And from 2003, he became a brahmanishtha guru, for that was when he became absolutely free from all his karmas.



In fact, Sri Swamiji's life helps us understand the concept of guru. I have seen Sri Swamiji and the association he had with his guru, Swami Sivananda – the dedication, devotion and faith that he had in his guru. Due to that conviction he progressed in life and evolved to the highest levels of cosmic realization. Many gurus only remain a knowledgeable or vidya guru, many only remain a tantric guru, but Sri Swamiji kept moving from one stage to another. In each stage of his life, his attainments are clearly defined: what he was when he was in Munger, what he became when he went to Rikhia, and what he became when he left Rikhia. Everyone has been witness to that transformation. However, these grades do not mean that one guru is better than the other.

The differentiation made between gurus, however, is only for the sake of understanding the role of guru in our life. For a disciple no guru is higher or lower than the other. They are all at the same level. Don't see the four categories as vertical attainments; see them as horizontal behaviours of different individuals.

A new chapter in discipleship

We should stop the guru chapter here. Last month we celebrated Guru Poornima and it was our first Guru Poornima without the physical presence of Sri Swamiji. Yet, it feels as if his presence has become even more vibrant in everyone's life. It feels as if we have become even closer to him.

Of course, I've spent very few Guru Poornimas with my guru. He would ask me to travel to different cities and states so that those who were unable to come to the ashram were not denied the occasion. However, his presence was always there. Whether I was celebrating Guru Poornima in Mumbai, Bangalore, Chennai or Bhuj, there was always the awareness that Guruji is present in Rikhia and that after the program is finished, I will have his darshan and then go to Munger.

In fact, there hasn't been a day in all my fifty years when I did not feel my guru's physical presence with me. Right from my birth I have lived in the vicinity, under the direction and guidance of Sri Swamiji, my guru. For fifty years I never thought about how I was going to live afterwards. I always lived in the present. My guru used to guide me, "Go here, go there, do this, do that." Whatever he said, I did. That was the completeness of my discipleship. And when I achieve the mark of fifty years, I find myself alone. For the first time, his physical presence is not there. Therefore, there has been a drastic change in the way I have lived.

For fifty years I was a public figure. From 2010, I have become a private citizen. This means that I have been relieved of certain duties, responsibilities and commitments which used to engage me in other directions. I have been made free to follow the commitments of sannyasa which are now important at this stage of my life. But when I begin the new chapter, the new journey, I have to redefine my association, my dharma and kartavya to my guru. Sri Swamiji had to redefine his dharma and kartavya to his guru when he left the ashram and when Swami Sivananda was no longer in his body. Many other disciples of Swami Sivananda had to redefine their dharma and their kartavya to their guru.

Those who were able to do this became the representatives of the Sivananda tradition. Those who can define the dharma and kartavya in our tradition will forge ahead, and those who cannot will remain where they are.

So, as a disciple, without the physical presence of the guru, I have to now define my dharma and kartavya. The strength of which dharma should now guide my path? Of course, the guru's grace is always there, but as a disciple how should I live now? Sri Swamiji lived all his life as a disciple. We used to call him guru, but he knew that he was a disciple of his guru, that he was only following the mandate of his guru. Therefore, it is the belief that a person carries within which is important, not what others say. I have to consider what I believe within myself in terms of who I am in relation to my guru. He is my guide, not you.

So, this is the thought with which we have begun this *Satsang Series*. God and guru have the same energy. I am not speaking of guru as a person; I am speaking of the guru tattwa here. The only difference is that God is formless and the guru has a form. We cannot see God, but we can see the form of the guru tattwa. When we perceive the guru tattwa in a form, we also experience a physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual connection with him. However, when the guru is not present in the body, we have to search for the guru tattwa within and decide what the dharma and the kartavya of the disciple now is. We must know it and spend the rest of our life according to it.

In summary

Our discussion so far was only to provide a background. It is a prologue, indicating certain intrinsic concepts of the guru tattwa. The concept of the guru tattwa has to be understood in the right perspective. It is the same as the spirit inside. There is no difference; it is only another term. You can say atma, soul, spirit, or guru tattwa. The guru tattwa is complete because it is part of that complete cosmic tattwa. That is full and this is full. *Poornamadah, poornamidam.*

The role of the guru tattwa is to lead one on the path of dharma and moksha. It is a spiritual role. The spiritual teacher is called a guru. The teacher of the material sciences is a teacher, lecturer or professor, but not a guru. The transcendental knowledge, or *para vidya*, is imparted by the guru who teaches you the path of dharma and moksha while the material knowledge, or *apara vidya*, and understanding is given by a teacher, an expert, to lead you in material life.

Gurus are people with special qualifications, special karmas, special samskaras, who have a purpose and a destiny to fulfil. They are led to fulfil that destiny without their knowledge just as a hungry man walking in the middle of nowhere can reach habitation by following the scent of food. These destined people are guided. They don't know that this will be their role in the future, that they are selected people, but they are propelled in a direction from which they cannot ever turn back. Such people are real gurus and they become our inspirers and guides.

Every person who comes to the guru establishes a relationship with them and accordingly receives and imbibes the teachings. However, the guru is an all-pervasive energy and when we try to limit that infinite energy into one person and try to follow him, the guru says, "No, search for the satguru who is within you. We can help you to go within, we can help you find the switch. But once the switch has been turned on, you will see the satguru within yourself. Then, you will also experience the external guru within.

These are the only things I want to say on the subject of guru. I cannot say that a guru should be like this or should not be like this. How can a disciple say what a guru should be like? That is what I find peculiar. Everybody is willing to write a thesis on guru, but nobody is willing to write an article on discipleship. I want to know discipleship: the dharma and kartavya of a disciple in order to connect with the guru tattwa, both externally and internally.

Human Character and Receptivity

6 August 2010

In summary

I told you of the incident where the flame at Gurupeeth remained lit for almost twelve days without any external aid, without a change of wick or addition of oil. The incident naturally brings up a question. What is it that kept the flame lit for so many days without burning out the wick or consuming any oil? In answer, the mind automatically responds, some form of energy. People may say it is a miracle; they may call it a special event. That's all right, anything can be said. However, the lit jyoti indicated something else, which is not a miracle or an astounding feat. That indication was the presence of a power, a shakti. The presence of a sixth element, which controls the basic five elements of earth, water, fire, air and ether.

The sixth element is pure energy; it is consolidated energy. It is said in the spiritual tradition of sannyasa and gurus that an enlightened master does not lose consciousness upon death. Rather, their consciousness becomes even more highly awakened than when they were alive. That consciousness, in the form of luminosity, becomes concentrated in specific areas where worship, rituals, chanting, prayers and meditation are performed. The guru tattwa can materialize or manifest in a place where the mind is brought to a positive state.

The uninitiated will call it the presence of a spirit, meaning ghosts, demons and ghouls. But ghosts and demons cannot enter Gurupeeth, for if they do they will be sublimated. It is not God, because God is all-pervasive. It is only the guru who manifested as an indication that 'I am ever-present'.

Guru tattwa: The guru tattwa represents the power of God in material life. God is unmanifest while the guru shakti is manifest. The shakti which is infinite and all-pervasive in the universe is known as God. When the same energy becomes contained in a body, in a form and shape at birth upon earth, it is known as the guru tattwa, the spirit, soul or consciousness. The soul which enters our life is what we call the satguru residing within us.

There are only two elements: *atma* and *paramatma*, the individual soul and the supreme soul, and the form of paramatma is *sat*, truth. It manifests in the form of satguru in our life and makes us aware of our life. It inspires us to break free of ignorance and darkness and become established in knowledge and light. This is what the inner spirit within every individual longs for. Your mind may desire wealth, children, name and fame, but the desire of the spirit is different from that of the mind. The spirit desires to remove the darkness, become established in luminosity and unite with the supreme spirit.

The energy of that supreme spirit manifests in the form of the guru tattwa and allows us to once again unite with it. The guru tattwa exists within every human being, every animal and every living creature. Just as the body cannot function without the sense organs, just as life is controlled by the mind and desires, the controller of the spirit which inspires it to once again unite with God is the guru tattwa.

People who are able to realize the guru tattwa become gurus in the course of time. You have to awaken it, you have to struggle for it, you have to deal with the whims of the mind, but there are people who are destined. They are born as messengers on earth and they have the right samskaras,



karma and destiny for it. Their consciousness and energy is awakened right from their childhood due to destiny and God's grace. They become the inspirers of society and they are propelled on the spiritual path without their knowledge. Something attracts and pulls them. They cannot resist it and become immersed in the spiritual tradition, the spiritual path. Society and family cannot bind or hold them back because destiny is guiding them, God is guiding them. They come to accomplish a special task and are involved only in that. Sri Krishna says in the *Bhagavad Gita* (4:7):

*Yadaa yadaa hi dharmasaya glaanirbhavati Bhaarata;
Abhyuthaanamadharmasya tadaatmaanam srijaamyaham.*

Whenever there is decline of righteousness, O Arjuna,
and rise of unrighteousness, then I manifest Myself.

The example before us is of Shankaracharya who at the age of eight renounced family and home and became a sannyasin. A child of eight was destined to leave everything behind and become a sannyasin, and he was later recognized as the guru of our *parampara*, tradition. Ramana Maharshi left home to buy vegetables from the market and arrived in Arunachal. Swami Sivananda was pulled by an invisible

force to return to India and march straight to the Himalayas because the call had come. Another example is our own guru, Swami Satyananda. He could have been anything in his life, but he was destined to be a towering spiritual personality. He was pulled into this life by his destiny, not his choice. Thus, people who are gurus have a special character, destiny, karma, samskara and mission in life. Ordinary people cannot emulate them.

Most people are caught up in their desires and attachments, in the web of family and society. Even if they wish to visit an ashram, people question them. They do not have that samskara. It is only received as a gift of God. It is called sat samskara for it connects one with sat, truth, whereas the *asat* samskaras connect a person with the world. *Asat* here means rajasic and tamasic: you like the attachments and illusions of the world, you are attracted to its glitter and glamour. If you see a nice car or house you want to acquire it. You are immersed in materialism. However, the sat samskaras free one from the attachments and illusions of the world and channel one towards the soul and God. They direct one to behold the truth within, and when one is able to behold or have darshan of the truth and the satguru within, one is close to God. This is experience of the guru tattwa.

Many disciples think that one day they will become as great as their guru. What a wrong idea, what a wrong connection! You have not come to the guru to become a guru; you have come to the guru to illuminate your path in life, to complete your journey. You should be guided by that principle and not harbour the thought that one day you will become like your guru. That is your ego, your ahamkara, your expectation speaking to you. If that is what you believe, then you are not even a qualified disciple, forget about becoming like the guru. In fact, you are not even a qualified aspirant of spirituality, forget about being a disciple!

You don't have the samskara, the karma or the destiny to be a guru. That's it, as simple as that. But what can you be? You can be a disciple. You can cultivate the karma, samskara

and destiny to become a good disciple. If you can improve your karmas, then maybe God will give you the strength to become the recipient of that high-voltage power.

The guru tattwa cannot be grasped by the mind. There comes a point where the intellect becomes a barrier, even emotions become a barrier. The guru tattwa is realized only when the intellect and emotions are sublimated and there is a connection of the inner spirit with the transcendental spirit. That is luminosity, that is enlightenment, that is realization.

The guru tattwa can be felt at a place where sadhana and worship are performed. At such a place sat samskaras can be received and peace of mind can be attained. Just as when you focus light into one beam it turns into a laser, the guru tattwa is intensified at a place where there is worship, faith, belief and surrender. One can experience that energy there. This is the significance of the event which took place at Ganga Darshan. It indicates that the guru tattwa, what a spiritual aspirant searches for in life, is present here.

Four types of gurus: Those people who are endowed with the guru samskara and karma are classified in four groups. These groups do not represent progression in guruhood, but they are parallel to each other. Since being a guru is a samskara, karma and destiny, one has to live and fulfil that, in whatever way God wills one to fulfil it. There are many different musical instruments but all create music. Whether it is a harmonium, a flute, a guitar or a sitar, it brings forth a melodious note when it is played. In the same manner, each of the four types of gurus plays a melodious note. No one is greater or lesser than the other.

In the categorization of gurus, the first is the knowledgeable guru. They have been blessed by Goddess Saraswati. They know everything, they have studied, read and digested everything and can speak on any subject. They may not necessarily be a sadhaka, but the guru tattwa is awakened within them. It is not necessary that they have had any experience of the progression in spiritual life. They are good orators and their destiny is to spread the knowledge.

The second type of guru is the yogi guru. They are those who are able to subdue the mind completely and acquire *sanyam*, restraint, in behaviour, thought and speech. They live and emanate *shanti*, peace; they live a very balanced and harmonious life, and become an example for all to follow. That is the yogi guru.

The third type of guru is the tantric guru. They are not those who perform miracles and work wonders and magic through incantations, yantras and mantras. The tantric guru is one who is a siddha, who can move the energies. One example is Ramakrishna Paramahansa. For the world he was a mad man, but he was a tantric guru of such calibre that his mere touch transferred the cosmic experience to Narendrar who later on became Vivekananda.

Baba Nityananda, a very great saint of this country, was also a tantric guru. Another example is Swami Satyananda. Without telling us anything, he taught us everything, at least to me. I did not even know that I was learning. When I was fast asleep he taught me everything. That is transmission. What method he used is another subject, but what took place was transmission. In fact, he has done that to all of us. Whether we are aware of it or not is our fault, block or lack of realization. But just as the sun shines equally on everyone, his grace has also come to each one of us equally.

The fourth type of guru is the brahmanishtha guru. He is one who has gone beyond body awareness, social awareness, mental needs and desires. Although he exists in the body, he is an avadhoota who lives the highest consciousness in the physical form; he is able to experience the transcendental in the physical form.

Gurus and teachers: In order to understand life and the guru's role in it we have to understand something else. There are four passages of life. The first two are known as *kama* and *artha*, fulfilment of desire and acquisition of prosperity. The people who give us the necessary skills for artha and kama, who teach us how to survive in the material world, are known as teachers. They teach us the ways to fulfil our expectations,



needs and desires, and give us the skills to survive in society. The other two passages of life are dharma and moksha, and those who give us the skills to understand and live them are known as gurus. They teach us the concepts of righteous and virtuous living, give us the skills to overcome our suffering and establish ourselves in a harmonious and peaceful state of mind.

The gurus fulfil their role by teaching dharma and moksha just as teachers fulfil their role by giving the education that will fulfil *kamanas*, desires. This indicates that the guru's role in our life is only in the sphere of dharma and moksha, not artha and kama. The role of the guru is only to propagate dharma and moksha. Thus, in the four stages of life, the role of the guru is seen in the last two stages, dharma and moksha, while the role of the teacher is in the first two stages, kama and artha.

Four classes of human character

In the human society, there are four different kinds of people. The first group is known as *aarta*. They are people who are suffering in their life, there is pain and struggle in their life and they are constantly trying to acquire that which will stabilize them. The second group is *artharathi*, self-motivated, self-oriented and selfish. Whatever they see, they want it. In their perception, the entire world revolves around them. They are not just self-oriented, but self-deluded because they cannot see anything beyond their own shell.

The third type of character is the *jignasu*, the enquirer, the searcher, the questioner. They are those who question and search, “Why this, why not that?” and try to find answers to their questions, solutions to their problems.

The fourth type of character is the *mumukshu*, those wanting liberation, wanting the ultimate expression, freedom and emancipation. For them the world has no attraction, purpose or meaning. They live there in order to survive, but their attention and attraction lies elsewhere. They are the mystical and spiritually-oriented people.

Each of these four types of characters creates a different relationship with the guru. The discipleship in each group is different; it is not universal. The journey of my discipleship is totally different from your journey. Your journey as a disciple is totally different from someone else’s journey as a disciple. There can be no comparison or competitiveness in it. However, people do compare and try to compete with each other, including sannyasins. That defeats the whole purpose of discipleship. The relationship that you cultivate with your guru is uniquely confined to yourself. That is the simple principle. It is uniquely confined to yourself.

Prayer of the sufferer and the self-oriented

When the first two types of people, those who are suffering and those who are self-motivated, associate with the guru, they say:

Tvameva mata cha pita tvameva; tvameva bandhushcha sakha tvameva;

Tvameva vidya dravinam tvameva; tvameva sarvam mama deva deva.

You are mother and you are father, you are friend and companion too;

You are knowledge and you are wealth, you are everything, my lord.

They cultivate a relationship which is essentially physical. After all, why did they say you are my mother and you are my father, why did they not say you are my guru? Why the sentiment, *tvameva mata cha pita tvameva* – you are my mother and you are also my father; *tvameva bandhuscha sakha tvameva* – you are my companion and you are my friend too; *tvameva vidya dravinam tvameva* – you are knowledge and also my financial and social security; *tvameva sarvam mama deva deva* – you are the one I hold dear above all.

This is the prayer of the sufferer and the self-oriented person, for they can only identify at the physical or gross level. For them the guru becomes their guide to prosperity in life. The guru becomes the counsellor to solve all their difficulties and problems in life. The guru becomes the doctor to cure all their diseases in life. The guru becomes the psychiatrist to ease all their stresses in life. The guru becomes the marriage counsellor to decide who the daughter or son is going to marry and whether they match or not. It's a crazy relationship! The physical relationship, the material relationship with the guru is something I find very difficult to understand. It's like using a cannon ball to kill a mosquito.

The physical, gross and material relationship which we establish with our guru as our ombudsperson, the problem-solver, is one level of relationship and it cultivates dependency. Of course the aarta and the artharthi also practise their mantra and meditation, they also come to every satsang and program, but their main purpose for association with the guru is limited to their selfish interests, "We should have peace and prosperity in our life and we receive these through guru's grace." They say, "Guruji, you give us so much love and affection, you are like our mother and father. You guide us in the right direction, you are our friend and guide." These are the sentiments that arise, but they belong to the material world. Such sentiments do not have any place in spiritual life.

When you see the guru as mother and father or friend, there is dependency in the relationship. You keep asking the

guru, “Should I do this, should I do that?” A person who has never managed a business becomes your business advisor, who has never studied medicine becomes your personal doctor! This is a material relationship, and eighty percent of people come in this category. They do not have any spiritual thirst.

Prayer of the enquirer and the seeker

The other levels of relationship, of the jignasu and the mumukshu, the disciples who are connecting with the guru not for a physical or material reason, but for development and growth in life, their sentiments are different. They do not say to the guru, “You are my father and you are my mother, you are my social security and you are my knowledge.” They say to the guru:

*Guru Brahma, guru Vishnu, guru devo Maheshwara;
Guru saakshaat Para Brahman; tasmaye shree gurave namah.*

Guru is the creator, guru is the sustainer, guru is the destroyer;

Guru is verily the transcendental element; I salute that revered guru.

They identify with that cosmic element, the guru tattwa. There is no physical dependency and they always remember that the guru is the illuminator of their path. They have a spiritual thirst; they have a purpose and an aim. They are looking for a direction in which they can walk. They want to know, “What am I doing here? Is my role in life limited to eating, working, retiring and dying? Why am I so far from my real home?”

The jignasu is searching for the essence of life and the mumukshu wants to attain the essence and become one with it. They are not looking for a cure for their diseases; their aim is clear. The guru who satisfies their thirst and guides them to march towards their aim, is their inspirer, not their mother and father.



So the relationship changes from an individual who is aarta or artharthi, suffering or self-oriented, to the other group, jignasu and mumukshu, enquirer and seeker. One is looking for material wealth and the other is looking for spiritual wealth.

Understand your intentions

There is a statement in the third chapter of the *Mundak-
opanishad* (3:1:10):

*Yam yam lokam manasaa sanvibhaati vishuddhasattvah
kaamayate yaanshcha kaamaan;
Tam tam lokam jaayate taanshcha kaamaamstasmaatmajnam
hyarchayed bhootikaamah.*

What it means is that those who want to enjoy prosperity should worship a self-realized person, who is the possessor of a purified mind, for all their desires to be granted. The Upanishad is stating that those who are seeking material or physical prosperity should associate with a guru. That's point one.

The next verse of the Upanishad states (3:2:1):

*Sa vedaitat paramam brahma dhaama yatra vishwam nihitam
bhaati shubhram;*

*Upaasate purusham ye hayakaamaaste shukrametadativartanti
dheerah.*

It means that those who want to become free from worldly desires and attain spiritual realization, attain freedom from their karmas and the bondage of life and death, should also go to the preceptor who is enlightened. So, a division has been made between the two groups of people. The sufferer and the self-oriented who seek prosperity, comfort and contentment in the material world should go to the guru as well as those who seek enlightenment and emancipation.

These statements of the Upanishad can be understood when you try to understand your own relationship with the guru. If you want to discern your dharma, kartavya and sadhana with respect to the guru, you have to first identify the kind of relationship you wish to cultivate with the guru. You cannot be an aarta or artharthi and expect moksha. You cannot be a jignasu and mumukshu and expect artha. First decide, don't be confused in your mind. You have to realize and understand what type of a person you are and what you are seeking. That will define your relationship with the guru.

If you are searching for spiritual awareness and enlightenment, then your relationship, connection and association with the guru must reflect only that. Don't try to mix both, don't try to mix the husband-wife principle and the guru-disciple principle together. The guru is nobody's husband, wife, friend or counsellor. Guru is guru only. The well contains water and we have to extract the water from the well. How much water we are able to pull out depends on the size of the container that we put in. If you put one glass in the well, you will get one glass of water only. If you put in a bucket, you will get one bucket of water. So, don't confuse the relationship with the guru thinking that you will go this way and also get

that in the meantime. That is why guru-disciple relationships do not succeed.

Many people become disciples, but are they successful? No. Only those who are true to their commitment and path no matter to which category they belong, are successful. Paupers have become emperors through the grace of guru, but the track has to be clear. The thought and idea has to be clear. The guru is not a counsellor. When the guru observes or instructs something, he is not looking at your present situation; his vision goes beyond that. I know many people who have followed the instructions of Sri Swamiji and prospered in life, and many people who have questioned Sri Swamiji's advice have regressed in life. Whether they progressed or regressed was determined by the clarity of their intentions.

If the intention is clear, progress cannot be challenged. But if there is confusion in your own mind – if you want to be spiritually awakened and at the same time follow the external, material path, combine that with this and call it yoga of synthesis or yoga of integration – that is not going to work. Ultimately, what makes your prayers and connection work is the power of your intention and sankalpa.

Milarepa's mumukshutva

You know the story of Milarepa. When Milarepa went to his guru Marpa, he had gone with the idea of spiritual learning. But the guru said, "No, while you are here with me, you work hard. What are your skills?" Milarepa said, "Well, I have a bit of experience in construction." Marpa said, "Construct a hut for me on top of the mountain by carrying stones from the base of the mountain." Milarepa built the hut by carrying huge rocks on his back. Upon completion, the guru came to inspect it and said, "No, I don't like the location of this house, I prefer the bottom of the mountain. Carry everything back, rock by rock, and reconstruct the house at the base of the mountain."

Milarepa had gone for spiritual instructions and guidance. But his guru said, carry rocks and build me a house. After



it was built, he said, “I don’t like the location of this house, change it.” In this way, he tested Milarepa, and Milarepa did not ever think, “My guru is abusing me; he is misusing me.” He did not think, “I am not fulfilling the role or the purpose for which I have come here.” When you go with a spiritual inclination, then you are totally in the hands of the guru.

Milarepa had the mumukshu character: “I want to be enlightened.” For such a disciple the guru is not a person who is ordering them externally, but the guru is everything. The guru becomes their guide in life so that even if he says, “Don’t practise any meditation, do push-ups every day,” it becomes their sadhana, and by just doing one thousand push-ups every day, they can become enlightened. That is the kind of faith one should have. Milarepa had it so he was successful. If we place ourselves in Milarepa’s shoes, what would be our thought? “I have come to learn high spiritual truths and all I am asked to do is karma yoga. I shall go to some other place where I can practise some deep meditation and learn some deep philosophical secrets.” That would be the thought, and it applies to every one of you.

Grades of receptivity

In these different categories of people, the aarta and the artharthi, the jignasu and the mumukshu, again, there are grades of receptivity – how receptive you are to the guru's instructions. Our paramguru, Swami Sivananda, has categorized disciples in four groups according to their receptivity.

Petrol: Swami Sivananda says the best grade is where the disciple is like petrol. One tiny spark can create huge flames instantly. One tiny instruction can transform the life of the disciple completely because there is no obstruction between the spark and the petrol. As soon as the spark touches the petrol, the fire will spread instantly. There is no resistance, no block, there is complete surrender from the disciple, complete letting go. In such a case, just one spark of guru's grace can transform the disciple's life. Therefore, the highest grade is where the disciple is inflammable like petrol.

Camphor: The second grade of disciple is like camphor. Ready to burn, all that is needed is proximity to a flame. It is the disciple whose *chitta*, consciousness, is clean, whose mind is peaceful, who has no expectations and desires and is willing to let go and surrender. The grace of guru lights up the camphor beautifully.

Coal: The third grade of disciple is coal. It is very hard to light coal, you need several flares and you also need to fan it. Without fanning, the coal will not be lit. Unless the guru humours you, you will not move forward.

There are many people who expect to be humoured by the guru in order to work. They will say, "I am not going to do this until Guruji tells me to do it. I will do it only if Guruji tells me." They are people who need to be humoured, they need to be told, "Come, go ahead and do it, don't worry about others, just go and do the work and then report back to me." Unnecessary humour. Why is it not possible to just get on with the work and finish it? Why do you expect the guru to humour and chase you, to fan your expectations and ego? All of you go through reactions when the guru does not fan your ego and such people are coals. However, if the coal

doesn't burn, one chucks it. Coal is not diamond. It can be chucked if it doesn't burn properly.

Plantain: The fourth grade of disciple is plantain. If you put the plantain tree in fire, it will never burn. It will just sizzle, but it won't burn. It won't catch fire because it is full of water. The plantain tree is a person who is filled with *vasanas*, desires, and for them the guru is a commodity to be used and exploited in order to fulfil their own desires and needs. Such persons do not follow the instructions of the guru, yet they call themselves disciples. They even try to instruct the guru, wanting him listen to them and act according to their ideas and thoughts. Such people abound, there are many who like to become advisors to the guru and manipulate situations to turn things in their own direction. Such disciples are filled with *vasanas* and they are like the plantain tree.

There may be some among them who do not have too many desires, they follow the guru's instructions, but they want to live in that world as well as this world. They are like the person who planted a mango seed only to take it out of the earth every day to see whether it had sprouted or not. The disciple who wants to know his attainments again and again is like coal. He has to work very hard to burn properly and the guru also has to work very hard to burn him.

Define your identity

You have to decide whether you are a plantain tree, coal, camphor or petrol. If you have *vasanas* and the guru is only a means for you to acquire and fulfil them, then you are a plantain tree. Are you coal? When, in your arrogance, ego responses and stubbornness you are not able to connect with sympathy and understanding with the guru, you remain black like coal. Coal is black outside and inside both. When arrogance and ego are predominant, they hamper the growth of the disciple.

These two types of disciples belong to the first category of *aarta* and *artharthi*. It is the *aarta* and the *artharthi* who

become rigid and filled with their needs and expectations like the plantain tree and coal. The jignasu is like camphor and the mumukshu is like petrol. These two are the categories of disciples that the guru can work on with ease. There is a statement in the *Bhagavad Gita* (2:7):

Shishyasteham shaadhi maam twaam prapannam.

I am your disciple. Instruct me who has taken refuge in you.

Arjuna says to Krishna, “I am surrendering my head, my mind to you. Now you only tell me what is the way.” So, the jignasus and mumkshus surrender their mind to the guru; they do not have desires and ego. When the guru puts a spark in them, they become aflame like petrol or lit like camphor – immediately.

The purpose of this discussion is to define where we are at present, at which crossroads, and to define the dharma, kartavya and lifestyle of a disciple, and the connection between guru and disciple. In this context, we have to first identify, “Am I an aarta, a sufferer? If I am, then where am I suffering?” “Am I an artharthi, do I have needs, desires and ambitions which I need to complete and fulfil before I take the next step?” You should not attempt to change into something you are not. If you do so, then you will have to



later come back to the previous level because you did not fulfil your karmas and samskaras at that level. Identify, “Am I a jignasu, am I a mumukshu?”

If you are a jignasu or a mumukshu, then there will not be any external, gross or material expectation. There will not even be the expectation of being in close proximity of the guru. But if you are an aarta or artharthi, self-oriented and suffering, you will seek proximity. Desire for proximity is only for becoming more dependent. Some people think that being in close proximity of the guru will indicate to people that they are very close disciples, that Guruji cares for them and they are the special ones. For such people their proximity to the guru does not indicate closeness, but dependency. Closeness to the guru is not experienced in the presence of the guru, but when you are far away from him. It is then that the feeling of intimacy must become strong.

Purpose of being in guru’s presence

When I look at my own life, I came to stay permanently in the ashram at the age of six. What was the thought in my mind at that time? Did I want to be enlightened? No. Was I suffering? No. Was there any self-motivation, self-interest? No. The only thought was, “I want to be near my guru”, that’s all. That was not only my thought, but of the majority of people who came to the ashram in those early years. “We just want to be with him, we just want to live near him”, that was our only thought.

We did not have any ambition to learn yoga or become yoga teachers. We did not have any ambition to travel and become gurus or a recognized person. Our intention was just to live near somebody whom we called our guru and who was the main attraction in our life. There were no expectations of the guru. It was not emotional dependency, but the force of his spiritual energy that drew us. It was the mumukshu attitude, although we did not know it at that time.

When Sri Swamiji used to tell us to do something, we used to do it. When there was nothing to do, we did not do

anything. But there was no craving, no expectation, no desire, no ambition that 'this should happen' or 'I am going to do this', nothing, just simple living.

Not an easy living either, we used to struggle hard. Today you see the prosperity of the ashram, but when we came we did not have clothes to wear, we did not have food to eat. Along with other swamis I used to go to the Munger market and pick up the bits of vegetables rejected by vendors and buyers. They were trampled upon by people, cows and dogs, we used to collect that, bring it to the ashram, clean it, cut out the rotten parts, cook it and eat it. For months together we did not know the taste of salt or sugar. If at any time there was salt in the food, it would be party time.

That is the life I've lived. That is the life the sannyasins lived here when we first came to our guru. We were not aarta, we were not suffering. We were not artharthi, there was no self-motivation or self-interest. We were not even jignasu, we had no questions. We just wanted to be there in the presence of our guru, that was all. We did not mind the hardship and the suffering because the ultimate purpose and goal of our life was there.

Today, if we have to eat khichari for a week continuously, many people will leave. They will say, "What kind of food are we getting here? This is no good, let's go." That means that you care more for your food relationship than the guru-disciple relationship. If food can influence your judgement and destiny, then you are not the right person. If someone's behaviour can influence your judgement and make you critical, negative, arrogant and abusive, then you are not the right one. If the environment can make you judge something, then you are not the right one. It means that you are not a focused person. You are aarta or artharthi. So, discipleship is not an easy thing. At the same time, it can become very easy if you simply let go.

There are many different types of people who come here. If you ask one person, "Why have you come to the ashram?" They will say, "I have come to learn yoga." Why?

“So that I can become a yoga teacher.” Ask another person, “Why have you come to the ashram?” The reply is, “So I can take sannyasa.” Why? “Then I can go out and teach yoga to everybody.” Which actually means that you want to be a guru. If you want to take sannyasa and then go out, what does it mean? That you have come here to become a guru. “After you initiate me I am going to go out and tell everybody that I am a guru.” That is everybody’s mentality today. Everyone is self-oriented and arrogant.

If the mind was clean and the heart was clean, then our understanding and relationship with the guru would be different. It would be an uplifting and inspiring relationship and not a dependent relationship. However, in order to make our relationship uplifting and inspiring, we have to understand the sadhana of the disciple, the lifestyle of the disciple and the association of the disciple with the guru.



Stepping into Discipleship

7 August 2010

In summary

There are four different characters of people. All of them eventually come in the presence of the guru. However, each has a particular aim in mind, and therefore we have to first understand the aim of each individual who comes to the guru, according to the category they fall under.

The first type of individual is aarta, a person who is suffering. There is no solace, peace, joy or happiness in their life; there is struggle and strife: social, physical and psychological. In every respect, the person is suffering. They come to the guru for guidance to overcome their suffering. The purpose of their association with the guru is only eradication of the suffering so they can live a happy, pleasant and comfortable life, a better life than what they've had. They are known as aarta.

The second group is artharathi, the self-motivated and self-oriented. They are like the child who goes to a shop and says, "I want this and this and this", everything. Artharathi is a business person. They try to can derive the maximum from others. You are all artharthis. Your relationship is based on personal motivation, whether for name, fame, status, recognition or something else.

With the acquisition of what they want, the artharthis feel very comfortable and happy. They find solace in the attainment and fulfilment of personal aspirations. People

who belong to this category also come to the guru for direction and guidance, but they come to fulfil their own needs rather than for following the guru's mandate. That's perfectly fine. After all, removal of suffering is a need of life, so people will definitely seek guru's shelter for that. That is why the Upanishads say that a person who wants to be freed of the lacks in material life should go to a guru.

The guru is able to awaken their sleeping fortunes. There are people whose fortunes are awakened and there are many whose aren't. The first group achieve success after success while the others keep trying but find themselves stuck. Such people go to gurus, but remember, they are not called disciples. They have faith and devotion and want to improve their life, therefore they go to the guru. However, they are not disciples; they do not practise the sadhana of a disciple. They practise the sadhana of bhakti, they practise their mantra, asana, pranayama and everything else that the guru asks them to practise, but their aim is connected with their selfish interests.

The third category is jignasu, the enquirer. One who does not find happiness or peace in the kind of life he has been living and feels a vacuum in life. He is searching for an indication on how the vacuum can be filled with happiness and joy. The state of the jignasu, the enquirer, is, "I want to know where I stand in relation to my life, I want to know what is my role in life, I want to know how I can improve in life, I want to know how I can progress in life." So, the aim or purpose of the jignasu in coming to the guru is not material, it is more personal and spiritual. Therefore, the relationship is different from the relationship of the aarta or artharthi with the guru.

The fourth category is of the person who wants to be enlightened. Many aspirants want to be enlightened, but their notion of enlightenment is usually fantastical. Enlightenment is the result of balanced living, thinking and behaviour. It is the result, not the aim. The aim in life is to cultivate spiritual awareness, more and more, every day

a little bit more. That is the aim of life. As we increase the span of our spiritual awareness, gain a broader and universal vision and cultivate the quality of understanding within us, then God-realization or self-realization is experienced as an outcome of that mental and spiritual balance and harmony. So, the fourth state, the mumukshu, means the person who is desirous of liberation, who wishes to develop spiritual awareness, and explore the spiritual dimension. The material and physical dimension does not hold him or her back. There is a deep yearning, a deep pining to be free.

Once, a person walked into the ashram of Ramakrishna Paramahansa and said to him, “Teach me the method by which I can realize myself.” Ramakrishna did not say anything. The man continued to insist that he had this great yearning for liberation, for moksha, saying, “Teach me something so that I can be liberated.” So Ramakrishna said, “All right, go to the river, take a bath and come back.” The man thought, “Peculiar instruction of the master. Is he going to give me shaktipat after a bath?” Anyway, he went to the river.



As he entered the river, he saw Ramakrishna Paramahansa also entering the water. He felt very happy and privileged. While they were both having their bath, suddenly Ramakrishna jumped on the man's shoulder and pushed him down into the water. He began to struggle, there was intense struggle to somehow come out of the water and breathe. After some time Ramakrishna released him and said, "How do you feel now? Enlightened?" The person said, "Are you crazy? You nearly drowned me." Ramakrishna asked, "What did you feel when you were drowning?" He said that there was an intense yearning to come out of the water and breathe fresh air. Ramakrishna said to him, "When the desire for your spiritual search becomes as intense as that, then you will be able to leave the fetters and bondages of the world behind you."

As long as there is no intensity in the effort, one cannot be successful in any endeavour. There has to be intensity, dedication and commitment in one's effort. Only then will it be successful. The mumukshu has this yearning to free himself or herself from the bondage and fetters of the material world. The material world, wealth, family and friends do not have any attraction for them. They are only there to fill time. When the right path is found, the mumukshu will simply leave everything behind like Buddha.

Buddha left everything behind in the dark of the night. He did not wait for daylight to say goodbye to everybody because he did not want to be distracted by their endearments. He left his sleeping wife and child; he left the entire kingdom in the depth of night. Nobody could obstruct him. Nobody could say, "Don't go, where are you going, how will you live, how will you survive?" That is mumukshutva, the yearning, the pining. When this yearning comes, the fetters of the world drop away. There is no attachment, emotional, sensual or sensorial, to anyone. The husband, wife, children, family and society can be left behind. One does not relate or associate with them in the state of mumukshutva. There is only a deep yearning and pining to discover the source of strength and light within oneself.

The first association with guru

All the four categories of people come to the guru for instruction, guidance, direction, inspiration and learning. At first, they all learn the same thing. All the four categories go to the primary class. There they learn, cultivate and express their understanding, faith, belief and love. It is their faith, belief and love which connects them to the guru.

A sufferer feels that the guru will help and guide him to come out of his miseries and suffering. That is his faith, and it makes him the recipient of guru's grace. It helps him follow the guidelines and instructions of the guru. The self-motivated person also comes with faith. When his wishes are fulfilled, the faith intensifies.

When you pray to God and He grants your wish immediately, He is enforcing your faith. When you pray to God and He grants the wish after many months, He is testing your patience. When you pray to God but He does not grant your wish, it is because God knows that you can achieve that yourself, you don't need His blessings. In the same way, we all pray to guru for guidance and direction. The relationship which cultivates between the guru and the individual – I am not using the word disciple – is based on faith, trust, belief and love.

Trust, faith, belief and love – these four constitute the beginning of inner awakening in the life of the individual who comes to the guru and these can be fully developed. However, if the intention of the seeker is material prosperity, as is the case with the aarta and the artharathi, then they will live at only one level of these four components. That will be their discipleship, no more.

The jignasus and mumukshus also connect with the guru with faith, belief, trust and love. However, as their aim and aspiration in life is not material but spiritual, there exists a greater possibility for them to forge a different, more intimate, deeper and higher connection with the guru by following the dharma of the disciple. Therefore, it is the jignasu and the mumukshu who are eventually able to follow

the dharma of the disciple, not the aarta or the artharthi because the guru has a limited role in their lives and their aspirations are material.

The sufferer and the self-oriented people, in their love, trust, belief and faith, develop a relationship with the guru which is dependent. They see the guru as their friend, father, mother, brother; the guru becomes the object which fills a vacuum in their life. Therefore the prayer, *Tvameva mata cha pita tvameva* – “You are my mother, you are my father”, *Tvameva vidya dravinam tvameva* – “You are knowledge and also my social security”. That is the perspective that a dependent person develops with regard to the guru.

The jignasu and the mumukshu do not develop such a dependent relationship. They see the essence, the nature, the quality, the spirit of the guru and delight in that. They derive inspiration from that. They emulate the teachings of the guru in their life to sublimate their own nature, thinking and behaviour. They make the effort to overcome the putridity of the ego, the vasanās, the passions, the ambitions and the desires which are never-ending.



It is not necessary for the aarta and the artharthi to come to the point of sublimation of their ego expressions and behaviour. They can live their egos, they can be arrogant, crude, rough and rude, they can be anything but they have the four components of trust, belief, faith and love. However, the jignasu and the mumukshu, in the process of cultivating their discipleship, have to first deal with their ego and the diversions that the ego can create in life, the destruction that the inner demons can bring about in one's mind. Ultimately, the jignasus and mumukshus become the adherents of the dharma of a disciple.

Stepping into discipleship

As long as the four components of faith, trust, belief and love are being cultivated, one is in a different category of discipleship. One comes to the guru with a desire and a purpose, and forms a relationship to fulfil that purpose. At this stage this relationship can be of three types: that of a dhela, a thela or a chela.

Dhela means a stone. What is the behaviour of a stone? It just stays in one place. If you want it to move anywhere, you need to make the effort to pick it up and carry or throw it. Wherever the stone falls, it will remain there. It does not move by its own impulse. It has to be always picked up to be taken to another spot and kept there.

At first, everyone is like a dhela. You are in a certain condition and you do not know how to remove yourself from it. You are so deluded that you find no method to be free of the delusion. You keep holding on to a tree and saying that the tree is not leaving you. So, one who is in a conditioned state of mind and is not able to change that mentality or takes very long to do so is a dhela.

Thela means a pushing cart. The disciple has to be pushed and pushed. The wheels will move as long as the momentum is there. The moment the momentum stops, the motion will stop. The guru has to then again come and push the disciple. Such people are known as thelas, pushing carts.

Chela is not a disciple yet. Chela is primary discipleship, apprentice discipleship. Chela is a person who listens to and obeys the guidelines, commands and instructions of the guru without trying to bring the ego component in between. This is the learning of the chela.

The chela is, in fact, clever. Just a hint is enough for him. The guru says, "This is your path." He accepts that and begins to walk it. If he stumbles he picks himself up, he does not sit there crying. He says, "Guruji has instructed me to walk this path and I will continue to walk it. I don't have the time to cry. I don't have the time to bandage my wounds." There is a statement that Sri Hanuman makes in the *Ramacharitamanas* (5:1):

Raamkaaju keenhen binu mohee kahan bishraam.

Without accomplishing Sri Rama's task, there is no rest for me.

These are the words of a chela. He never stops; the guru only gives him an indication. No matter the problems, whether there is a storm, rain, sun or snow, he keeps on walking by clearing his path. He is not fazed by any situation of life and he does not turn away from his duty. The dhela is not able to follow the duty, he asks, "Who is going to throw me to the next stop? What will happen to me? Who will take me forward?" He sees himself as helpless and weak. He becomes dependent on the guru, "Guruji will tell me everything, teach and explain. I will listen to what he says."

The chela, while developing faith, devotion, love and belief within continues to walk the path directed by the guru. It is this chela who later becomes a *shishya*, disciple. Becoming a disciple means offering up your head.

There is a story of Guru Gobind Singh, one of the Sikh gurus. Once, he said to his disciples, "We have to prepare ourselves for protecting the dharma and I want people who are ready to offer their lives." One person raised his hand. Guruji said, "Okay, come inside the tent." They went in and there followed a loud noise from within the tent and Guruji

came out with a naked sword in his hand with blood dripping from it. Everyone thought, “Wow, the guru himself has killed the person who offered his life.” Guruji called out, “I want another person.” Fearfully, another person raised his hand. Guruji took him inside the tent and the same scene followed. In this way, somehow five people offered themselves. No one else dared. Finally, Guru Gobind Singh said, “The blood that you see belongs to a goat. The five who are dear to me, *panch pyare*, are sitting inside the tent.”

The five were those who had surrendered their heads to the guru. All others were chelas, they weren't disciples. Those who were sitting outside were followers. It is the ones who surrender themselves one hundred percent, who no longer have any identity of their own who are disciples. This is the difference between a chela and a disciple. The chela will come to the guru, participate in satsangs, enjoy the kirtans and the environment, but the disciple has given himself over to the guru, he belongs to the guru.

There are many things that the guru can ask us to do and we may not like it. Why do we dislike or like it? The dislike is because of our ego and the preference is also because of our ego. Can there be an objective understanding of the guidelines of the guru in any disciple's life? I don't have to answer this. You know the answer yourself. Can there be an objective understanding of the guru's instruction in anybody's life?

You all want instructions individually, specifically for yourself. But do you understand those instructions? Or is it just to satisfy your ego of having spoken to the guru? Many people speak nonsense only with the idea that, “I am being able to speak.” Therefore, the ego has to be managed in order to cultivate the final relationship with the guru. In the state of the chela what is required is management of the ego while following guru's guidance.

Dhela, thela and chela are states which all the four categories of people – aarta, artharathi, jignasu and mumukshu – undergo before becoming a disciple. This is the primary

class, and here everyone's mind goes through and attains the same state: of faith and devotion. The state of devotion is a pure state which connects a person, whether aarta, artharthi, jignasu or mumukshu, with the energy of the guru. Devotion and faith are pure in themselves, there is no blackness or impurity in them.

So, at the beginning we connect with the guru with faith and devotion and slowly imbibe the teachings. If he asks us to practise mantra japa, we do the number of malas as per the instructions. He may prescribe some other practices, whether pratyahara, dharana or dhyana so we are able to transcend our difficulties, quieten the mind and make it one-pointed. Until this point, everyone is receiving similar teachings and they are trying to establish a relationship whose basis is faith, love and devotion. This awakens belief and conviction, and as these intensify, we begin to become disciples.

Receiving discipleship

When the management of the ego begins according to guru's guidance, then one steps into discipleship. Prior to that you can follow every instruction, you can be an initiate also. There are initiates in mantra, jignasu sannyasa and karma sannyasa who are still at the aarta and artharthi stage. No problem, because a chance and an opportunity is being given to understand where they are and to move from that point. So, one can be initiated, but that initiation doesn't mean that one is qualified to receive discipleship.

I heard a story recently. Somebody in Europe had taken mantra initiation about twelve years ago and believed that he had become a disciple. After taking the mantra he never stayed in contact, but there was always the conviction "I am a disciple." After twelve years were complete, he went to Swami Anandananda and said, "I have been a disciple for twelve years, but I have not gained anything." Swami Ananda said, "What have you done in all this time? Did you just take initiation and sit in your house for twelve years waiting for



something to happen? You did not do anything to make things happen.”

That is the attitude that people have: “Although I have been initiated, I haven’t received anything, I haven’t experienced anything, I haven’t realized anything.” This kind of a thought comes when you are constantly taking the seed out from the ground to see if it is sprouting or not. If you take the seed out from the ground every day, it will never sprout. That is how people relate with the guru: “I have received a mantra and now everything is going to happen in a miraculous way. I don’t have to do anything, I will just sit and wait and watch everything fall into place.” It is like a man lying under a fruit tree with the mouth open waiting for the fruit to fall into his mouth. The fruits are falling all around him, but he is not willing to stretch out a hand to pick one up and eat it. He is happy to lie under the tree with his mouth wide open waiting for the fruit to drop. For twelve years this man waited with his mouth wide open, for twelve years he did not make the effort to stretch out the hand to pick up the fruit which was there beside him. The relationship was limited to “I am a disciple and happy in that”.

That is not the dharma, the duty, the obligation of a person who wants to progress in spiritual life. Those people who, after having cultivated their faith, belief, love and trust in the guru, wish to pursue the spiritual path, have to

transcend their egos to become a disciple. Only such people are able to follow the path of discipleship to the end.

If you read the writings of Sri Swamiji, he explains the struggles and difficulties he had to face in the ashram of his guru and how he had to learn to accept everything and control his ego expressions and reactions. Just by controlling the ego one becomes a disciple. As long as one has ego, one is not a disciple. You are in the first category of discipleship, not yet a disciple. You are in primary class.

There is a specific syllabus in primary class: awaken devotion, belief and love within in whatever way you can. You may live in proximity of the guru for some time, participate in satsangs, come and go; you have to connect yourself with the guru tattwa, connect yourself with the mission of the guru. However, there comes a point of breakthrough when the thinking changes. That is when we want to change the normal path of life that we had been walking, for we do not see any meaning in it. That is the time when we feel that the purpose of our life is not material but spiritual, and we want to go nearer to that spiritual element. When these thoughts come to the mind, naturally, the attraction for sense objects diminishes.

I am telling you something very important. If you want to have a breakthrough today, you will not be able to achieve it. You can only bring in the thought, but you cannot get rid of your desires. You may think that from today you will become spiritual, but you will not be able to reduce your worldly desires. However, sometimes there is a breakthrough in the lives of jignasus and mumukshus who had a higher purpose for connecting with the guru to begin with. They are the people who become disciples and follow the dharma of a disciple.

For such people who decide to pursue the spiritual journey, what is the dharma? What attributes do they need to cultivate in life? What is the dharma, the sadhana and the lifestyle of a disciple?

Disciple's dharma: the first level

The dharma of the disciple at the first level is observation of the natural thought patterns and ensuring that these thoughts are reflections which inspire and clarify the direction one wants to walk in. The thoughts should not create confusion about what one needs to do. Deciding on the direction of the journey through reflection is the first dharma.

One has to ask, "What is the purpose of my life?" The purpose of human life is not God-realization, but cultivation of spiritual awareness. God-realization or self-realization is an outcome of a highly evolved spiritual awareness. And spiritual awareness requires reflection just as acquisition of a material object, whether a car or a house, requires reflection. Even if you merely want to buy a pair of shoes you will think about it the whole day long, but when it comes to spiritual awareness you want to leave it at just one thought, "I want spiritual awareness." You will not attain spiritual awareness by just a thought. No, it requires deep and continuous contemplation.

Moksha or God-realization is an ambition, but first you need to acquire spiritual awareness through reflection; therefore, understand the difference between ambition and reflection. It is reflection that enables you to understand the guru's instructions. Reflection also ensures that you do not fall into the trap of negative thoughts. In fact, reflection needs to be converted into a positive force to keep one safe and free from negative thoughts. Otherwise, reflection can also give birth to negativity. Therefore, the first dharma of the disciple is to manage thoughts through reflection.

Do not presume that once you have arrived at the guru's doorstep, you have surrendered yourself and now the guru will decide everything. Everybody says that at the beginning, but after ten years they say, "Guruji has not decided anything for me. I am wasting my time here. For ten years he has not even spoken to me or looked at me." First you said let the guru decide, and when the guru decided, you said the guru is not even talking to me. This kind of thought has to be monitored.

Monitoring of thoughts is the first step. Jealousies come up in associations, they have to be monitored; frustration comes up in association, it has to be monitored. All the reactions and responses that we undergo in our own mind have to be monitored. There is a very common experience. When you look at somebody and see them smiling at something, you begin to wonder, "What have I done? Maybe the person looking at me is smiling about something I have done." This is self-doubt.

Doubts and questions will come, but don't allow yourself to be swept by their current. Always try to look for the solution to doubts and do not hold your doubts and questions as final. They are only the stepping stones to a new door of perception and knowledge. Therefore, watch that your thoughts are flowing in the right direction.

If you get swept by a negative thought, the learning stops. The negativity of the thought controls and guides your behaviour and actions. The moment you see a negative thought cross your mind, say, "Stop one moment. Why have you come?" Just as you would stop a robber entering your house. You would fight with the robber to push him out of your house. In the same way, can you stop that negative thought in your mind, fight it and push it out?

The ability to do that is the first qualification of discipleship. If you are not able to do it, then try to improve. This applies to everybody, the sannyasins, guests and all spiritual aspirants. Therefore, reflection or *vichara* is the first dharma of the disciple in order to protect the purity of mind and intention. Do not allow yourself to be diverted by the negative elements in your life. Look upon your thoughts as a torchlight. When you find that negative thoughts are entering your mind, know that your battery is failing. Change the battery to get a brighter light. In hazy light the mind will not see things clearly, but when the light becomes brighter, when positive and creative thoughts abound, then the negativity will automatically run away from you. Make the effort so that your thoughts are always positive,

appropriate and right. This is the first dharma and sadhana of a disciple.

Everybody fails in the first dharma itself because of competitiveness, comparativeness, frustration, jealousy, fear, insecurity and dependencies. These are the whirlpools of the mind in which one gets stuck. Therefore, although many people aspire to be disciples, there have been very few disciples in the world. There have been very few true disciples in the world.

After balancing the thoughts and ensuring that they become the armour to protect one from the negative influences of life, the disciple has to cultivate four foundations which will enable the progress in spiritual life. These are: viveka, vairagya, shat sampatti and mumukshutva.



FOUR FOUNDATIONS OF A DISCIPLE'S DHARMA

Viveka

Viveka, discrimination, is to know the difference between right and wrong. When we react and respond to situations and people, we don't know if we are reacting in the right or wrong manner, in a constructive or detrimental manner. That is where *viveka* has to play a role. Even when you talk to your own family, friends, associates, brothers, sisters or guru, use the quality of *viveka* to transmit your thoughts and speech, and that will make you a better person.

Viveka also plays an important role when the disciple is trying to strengthen the thoughts, to expand the range of consciousness with the help of thoughts. At that time you need to know the difference between right and wrong; you don't necessarily have to accept or reject either, but you must know the difference. That much is enough.

So, that is the first foundation of spiritual life – *viveka*, the ability to know the difference between the true and the false, the right and the wrong, the appropriate and the inappropriate.

Vairagya

The second foundation is *vairagya*, dispassion. I will give you an example. There are many people sitting in this room, but each one is focused on me. There are people beside you, behind you, in front of you, all around you. However, at present you are disconnected from them and only connected with me. The moment you disconnect from me and begin to talk with someone else, you will begin to relate with your immediate environment. When you relate with your immediate environment, you become involved, and that is *raga*, attachment or association. However, if despite everything and everyone around, you still remain focused and the people and objects have no influence on you, that is *vairagya*.

Once you know the difference between the right and the wrong with the help of *viveka*, you have to develop *vairagya*

from situations or actions that limit and bind you. If you become caught up while performing an action or aspiring for the fulfilment of a desire, then it is with the help of vairagya that you can again free yourself. There may be attachment, but the attachment should not affect you.

Vairagya does not mean rejection, leaving, eliminating or detaching. Vairagya means to have one single focus, even though we are surrounded by attachments and attractions. Those who are unable to maintain the focus while interacting and being involved with everything around them, will eventually become attached. Therefore, vairagya is the second foundation to free oneself from the restrictive, limiting and fleeting moments of enjoyment and suffering, joy and pain.

Shat sampatti

The third foundation is shat sampatti. This actually defines the sadhana of discipleship. *Shat* means six and *sampatti* means wealth. These are the six forms of wealth that a disciple must equip himself with.

Saam: The first is *saam*, letting go of desires. Somebody once asked Buddha, how can one know that one is progressing in spiritual life. Buddha replied that when all unnecessary desires reduce, know that you are progressing in spiritual life. When the attraction for fulfilment of desires reduces, you are embarking on the spiritual journey. In order to achieve this, you have to filter out the necessary from the unnecessary. You do not need to negate or reject the necessary needs and desires, for desire is the force of inspiration in life. It is due to desire that you walk, eat, live. Desire is a force in itself. However, you can definitely reject the unnecessary desires which bind you to sense objects and delude you. You have to use the energy of desire, but you have to remain free from the result of desires. This filtering needs to take place.

Dam: The second wealth to equip oneself with is known as *dam*, restraint of the senses – controlling the senses of their unhampered movements and guiding them. When the senses

are active, they dissipate the mental prana, they change the mental behaviour, thought patterns and the structure of emotions, they make the mind more material and create the state of *ashanti*, disturbance. In the state of disturbance and dissipation one cannot contemplate on anything positive or uplifting. Therefore, if we are able to learn the process of restraining the senses, then we can better manage the dissipated mental behaviours and our contemplation of the higher truth can be continuous.

Uparati: The third wealth is *uparati*. It means becoming aware of the sense objects which attract you and then rejecting, negating or ignoring them. If some people suddenly start talking while you are listening to me, what will you do? You will either tell them to hush or ignore them. If you are a reactive person you will say, “Keep quiet”, but if you are a non-reactive person you will just block your ears and say, “They don’t exist”. You will ignore them. This is how the sense objects have to be ignored. Let them not have any sway, pull or attraction which diverts the mind from its aspirations and goals.

Discipleship does not oppose enjoyment of sense objects, but there should not be excess enjoyment. We have been born on earth to experience sense objects. It has been said in the *Ishavasya Upanishad*:

*Om Eeshaavaasyamidam sarvam yatkincha jagatyaam jagat;
Tena tyaktena bhunjeethaa maa gridhah kasyasvid dhanam.*

What the verse means is that enjoy the pleasures of this world, but at the same time renounce them so you do not covet that which you don’t have. No one is free from enjoyment of the world; however, there needs to be some kind of brake. A sadhu and a disciple apply brakes in their lives. If you do not have the money to have a meal at a five-star hotel, eat at a roadside stall, and don’t desire the other meal, remove your mind from that which is beyond your capacity. Think about it only when you have the capacity for it. Don’t get caught in the attraction of that which is beyond your means

and curse yourself. Enhancement of desire is the bondage of sense objects, and that happens when there is no uparati in life. Uparati means ignore that which is beyond your limits and enjoy that which is available to you. It is a very necessary quality in a disciple's life.

Titiksha: The fourth wealth is *titiksha*, patience and acceptance of a situation. If someone abuses you, do not react. However, titiksha always needs to be connected with viveka, vairagya and vichara. You have to know when to react and when not to react.

There is a story. In a jungle near a village lived a snake, which was very poisonous. Everybody was afraid of it. It used to bite and kill all travellers who walked through the jungle. People developed such fear that gradually they stopped passing through the jungle.

One day a sadhu came to the village and rested there for the night. The next morning as he was preparing to leave, the villagers asked him, "Where are you going?" The sadhu said, "I am going to the next village through the jungle." The villagers said, "Please don't go that way, there is a very poisonous snake there and it kills everyone. You take the long route, circumvent the jungle." The sadhu said, "All right, as you say." But you know sadhus, they don't listen to anybody. Just to avoid discussion and unnecessary argument they say, "All right, whatever you say will be done", but in fact they do their own thing. So he went his own way through the jungle footpath.



The moment the snake saw the sadhu he came out hissing, ready to strike. However, when he came before the sadhu he felt that there was no fear in this person. The snake was stunned for a moment. He thought, "Till now at my very sight people reek of fear. Who is this person? He is not fearful at all. Let me question him." So the snake questioned the sadhu, "Are you not scared?" The sadhu spoke in the snake's language, "No, I am not scared." The snake said, "You should be, you are on scare tactics." The sadhu said, "I am not scared at all."

The snake was so surprised that he said, "Can you teach me to be like yourself?" The sadhu said, "I can initiate you. You will have to become good. You will have to stop biting and killing people." The snake said, "That will be difficult, but I will try. It goes against my nature not to hiss and bite. You want me to become a saint overnight, but I will definitely try."

The sadhu gave him a mantra and the snake crawled to the top of a rock and sunning itself, started repeating the mantra. The guru left. Now, some other travellers were coming behind the sadhu. They saw the snake sunning on the rock with eyes closed, lost in contemplation, sleeping. They did not know that he was repeating the mantra. Just as everybody sleeps when they do their mantra, the snake was also dozing. So they gathered some courage, picked up a stick and started hitting the snake. The snake thought, "My sadhana is being disturbed. Let me go back to my hole." He managed to go back to his hole and continued doing the mantra.

The next day he again came out to lie in the sun and do his japa. But now the villagers knew that the snake was somehow not well and not biting anybody, so they mustered the courage to again go and hit him with sticks and rocks in order to kill him. Now the snake thought, "Why did I take this mantra and commit to my guru that I will not retaliate! They are beating the life out of me and I can't do anything. However, I have given my word to my guru that I will not kill anybody so let me just follow that sankalpa."

Somehow, he struggled and managed to get back into his hole again. The third day, the guru came back. The snake had thought that he would not go out to his meditation spot because people would again come to hit him, so he was doing his sadhana at home. The guru came to the hole and called out, "O disciple, are you in there?" The snake gradually, painfully, slithered out. Poking his head out of the hole he said, "Guruji, I am unwell." Guruji asked, "What happened?" He replied, "People have beaten me up. They have beaten the life out of me." The sadhu asked, "Why?" The snake said, "I don't know. Two days ago you gave me the mantra. I was lost in contemplation and meditation. People came and started to hit me, they threw stones and rocks at me, my body began to bleed in many places, but you told me not to do anything so I had to remain quiet."

The sadhu said, "Yes, I told you not to kill anybody, but I did not ask you to stop hissing. I asked you not to bite and kill. But I did not ask you to stop hissing. If you only hiss at people who come to harm you, they will not have the guts to come near you."

I have told you this story to indicate that even in patience and peacefulness, viveka has to play an active role. Without viveka, there cannot be total peace. Without knowing the right and the wrong there cannot be total peace. Total peace will only be experienced when you do the right thing at the right time in the right manner. That is titksha, having patience and using viveka.

Shraddha: The fifth wealth is *shraddha*, faith. This faith is much deeper than what the mind can reflect or realize.

There is a story of a priest who was travelling through certain remote islands on a ship. As they disembarked to explore the islands they found savages dwelling there. But surprisingly, they were saying the prayers of the Lord, "Our Father who art in heaven, Thy kingdom come . . ." However, they were saying it wrong, the sentences were all topsy-turvy.

The priest asked the savages, "Who has taught you these prayers? They are all wrong." The savages replied, "About

ten years ago, another priest like you had come to our island and taught us this prayer. Then he left. Of course we are illiterate people, we may have forgotten the right words and sentences, but we pray whatever we remember." This priest told them, "Don't worry, I will teach you the correct method." Painstakingly, word by word, he taught them the prayer of the Lord. When the savages had learned it and were able to repeat the whole prayer correctly, the priest thought his work was done, so he got on his ship and left.

When the ship was out on the ocean, about four-five hours away from the island, somebody called out from the crow's-nest, "Unknown objects approaching the ship." Everybody came out to the decks to look at the objects. When they came nearer the ship, they were recognized as the savages from the island. They were running on water. Everybody was utterly surprised. How could the savages have the power which only our Lord Christ had, to walk on water?

When the savages reached the ship, they said to the priest, "Please, father, help us again. After you left, we forgot the right method of saying the prayer. So we have come to request you to teach it to us again." The father looked at them and said, "Whatever you are doing is right. The right method which I taught you did not work, but whatever you are doing is the right method because it has given you innocence of the heart and connected you with the Lord." That is shraddha, faith.

There are two expressions of faith. One is intellectual and the other is from the heart. One is from the mind and the other is from the heart. At the beginning the faith is from the mind, "I trust, I believe, I regard." But later, those experiences become deep and the faith becomes a heart experience. This is the wealth, the power, the shakti which endows you with spiritual energy. Shraddha or faith endows one with spiritual power and force.

There is a story of a man who had gone to visit a sannyasin on the other side of the Ganga here. The Ganga was in spate.

It was monsoon time and the water levels were high. By the time the man was ready to return home, evening had descended and there was no boat to cross the river. The man became worried and said to the sadhu, "I want to go home but there are no boats. I don't know what to do." The sadhu said, "Don't worry, I am going to write a mantra on a piece of paper. Put it in your pocket and you will be able to cross the river fearlessly." The sadhu wrote some mantra on a piece of paper, folded it and put it in the man's pocket.

The man took a step in the water, he did not sink. He took another step, and did not sink. He became confident and started to walk on water, thanking the sadhu for giving him such a beautiful mantra which would enable him to cross the river. When he was in the middle of the river however, a thought occurred to him, "I wonder what the mantra is. I can make a lot of money with it." He took out the paper from his pocket, opened it and read the mantra. It said, "Rama". The man said, "Oh, this is the mantra? That's it! How can this mantra carry me across a river?" The moment this doubt came, he went right in. He drowned.



The moment a doubt came about the mantra, he failed. As long as the mantra was in his pocket and he did not know what it was, he had absolute faith. But when he saw the mantra *Rama*, he thought, “I know this.” He lost his faith at that point. He identified with his intellect by saying “I know this”. He sunk because he lost his connection with faith. His faith became intellectual and it was not enough to take him across the river, but as long as he did not know what the mantra was he had implicit faith, which was an expression of the heart.

One needs to free oneself from the questioning mind to develop faith. Do not bring your intellect between you and your faith. Till you are a dhela, thela and chela, the intellect will interfere every now and then, but when you come to the level of acquiring the shat sampatti, then it is the sadhana of the disciple to let go of the intellect. You have to now listen to the guru with implicit faith, just as a child listens to its mother when she asks him to not put his hand in fire. If the child were to apply the intellect and think, “I will put my hand in fire once to check whether what my mother is saying is right or not”, then his hand will certainly burn. If he questions his mother’s words and does not follow them with implicit faith, he is bound to get hurt. In the state of faith there is an inherent belief that whatever my mother, or my guru, says is for my wellbeing, therefore I must listen to it. So, shraddha means to keep the emotions free of the intellect, and it is the fifth component of shat sampatti.

Samadhan: The sixth component of shat sampatti is *samadhan*, which means awareness of only one entity which becomes the solver of all one’s ills and problems of life. Samadhan means concentration on *sat*, the truth. It is awareness of the truth. Sri Shankaracharya explains the term in *Aparokshanubhuti*. He says that the word is not used here to mean the solution of a problem or question, which is its literal meaning. In this context it relates to life in its entirety, and the culmination of life is truth. Therefore, one who is aware of and contemplates on truth adopts the principle of samadhan in his life.

Thus, vichara, reflection; viveka, discrimination; vairagya, dispassion; shat sampatti, the sixfold wealth including reduction of desires, restraint of senses, ignoring the unnecessary desires and ambitions, patience, faith, and awareness of the truthful nature constitute the attributes which a disciple must try to acquire in life.

Shravan: ability to listen

One of the most important precepts of discipleship is also *shravan*, listening – listening to the instructions, the mandates, the directions, the guidance and the teachings of the guru. It means being alert to the teachings of the guru. If you are not alert, he may say something which is especially relevant to you, for the relationship between guru and disciple is personal, one-to-one, but you may miss it.

Once, three statues were presented in the court of a king. They were all identical. The man who brought them asked a question of the king, “Can anybody in the court tell which statue is of the highest quality, which is of the lowest quality and which is of medium quality?” All the courtiers were stunned. However, there was one person who was rather sharp. He said, “My lord, let me investigate the statues a bit.”

He went and walked around the statues, looking at everything – the eyes, the nose, the ears. Then he said to the king, “My lord, can I have one piece of straw?” A long piece of straw was given to him. The man poked the straw in the ear of one statue where there was a tiny hole. The straw came out through the other ear. He took another piece of straw and put it in the ear of another statue. The straw went in and came out through the mouth. Then he took a third piece of straw and stuck it in. The straw went in and disappeared.

The king said, “Thank you very much, I have received the answer.” Did you get the answer? The superior quality statue was the one from which the straw did not come out, for it had the ability to digest what it hears. That is the statue of a disciple. That is how disciples should be.

What you hear you must digest, but that is not usually the case. Most people gossip away what they hear, the straw comes out through the mouth. You belong to the second category, what you hear you blurt out. You do not digest it. When you do not digest what you hear, it comes out as verbal diarrhoea. This is the medium category of statue, or disciple. He hears the guru's words and then becomes the GBC, Guru Broadcasting Company: "You know, Swamiji told me this today." You think, "He gave me so much importance. I am just trying to tell other people how lucky I was to have that discussion. He doesn't talk to them, he talks to me." This is all ego manipulation. I do not know if you realize it, but this is all ego manipulation. Each person here is involved in that. The medium category of statue or disciple is one who hears something and then blurts it out.

The lowest kind of disciple is one who hears something and the words come out through the other ear. The words go in through one side and come out from the other. Nothing is retained. That is the lowest type.

You will find these three characteristics within you too. Many times you hear things and ignore them. You are the lowest type at that time. Many times you hear things and just broadcast it to prove a point. That is the medium class. However, there are people who hear things and digest and live according to that. That is the higher class. Thus, shravan, listening and imbibing, is another dharma of a disciple.



Dharma of a Disciple

8 August 2010

The opportunity to undergo the process and the experience of guru-disciple relationship is definitely rare and unique. Those who are able to follow the path to its end are indeed the most fortunate, for they live their entire life in the shade of divine grace. This journey begins with understanding the role that the guru has in our life, what should be the appropriate association with the guru and how we can fulfil the dharma of a disciple.

The destiny of every individual is to cultivate spiritual awareness. However, it is only at a certain level of evolution that the desire to awaken spiritual awareness becomes intense. Such people are known as *jignasus* and *mumukshus* and they are the ones who eventually become disciples. The other two types of human character are *aarta* and *artharthi* and they associate with the guru for self-oriented motives. Nevertheless, at the beginning of their association, all four types cultivate the same faith, trust and belief in the guru and associate with truth in the company of the guru. All go through this process.

Another level of association begins with initiation. The spiritual connection with the guru develops with the transmission of energy which takes place at the time of initiation, not before that. When the guru gives the mantra, the mala, the initiation, that is the first spiritual connection between guru and disciple; it is the bond of energy, of *shakti*. Prior to

that you may associate with the guru for twenty years, admire him as a great, good and saintly man, but that understanding and connection will be mental and intellectual.

As long as the connection is mental and intellectual, it can fluctuate. It will make you compare your guru with others. Such an intellectual or mental connection does not indicate the pure intention of the jignasu and the mumukshu.

The intention of the jignasu and the mumukshu is what develops and nurtures the guru-disciple relationship because both these characters are ultimately focused on spiritual awareness, on spiritual attainment. Therefore, they are eventually able to establish the appropriate relationship with the guru and follow the dharma of a disciple to the best of their ability.

The others who follow the guru fall in the categories of dhela, thela and chela. A chela need not be one hundred percent surrendered to the guru; even ten percent will do. But a disciple needs to be one hundred percent surrendered, without this discipleship will not awaken. A chela may continue to follow his desires and at the same time practise contemplation. He may sometimes follow the guru's instructions and sometimes he may not. But once you become a disciple, then you do not have the choice.

The disciple is not like an ordinary person. Once he was, but his enquiry, his faith and belief drew him closer to his inner spirit and the guru. When this attraction becomes so strong that he wants to become one with the guru, to live in the guru's energy field, then he has to follow certain dharmas.

Reflection: the first step

When the jignasu and the mumukshu are initiated and form a connection with the guru and wish to deepen and explore their spiritual nature, the first ability they need to acquire is of reflection, or vichara. They need to ask, "Why have I come into spiritual life, why do I wish to explore it?" If you are a jignasu or a mumukshu, clarify your intention, what is it that you are looking for in your quest. Then, through reflection,



protect that seed of spiritual development which you have planted within.

When a farmer plants seeds, he protects them from wild animals, birds, insects, and also from overgrowth. In the same manner, the pure intention has to be protected through continuous and constant reflection. When the disciple first comes to the guru, there is a *sankalpa*, pure intention, and that is the most valuable thing in his life. That *sankalpa* has to be continuously protected. The sentiment, thought, faith and belief with which we first approached the guru needs to be protected from negative elements. It is not enough to just say that my intention is to develop spiritual awareness. Be always careful about what is entering your mind and whether it is something which can damage, distort and divert your attention from your goal. A negative thought is enough to create havoc in the mind.

Protect yourself from the negativities that other people or the environment project on to you, or the negativity which you express from within yourself as a response or reaction to people, situations or circumstances. In order to fulfil the dharma of a disciple, you have to have the level of meditative awareness through which you can be an objective witness to what you experience. The moment you become subjective, you lose the clarity and direction of the path. This is one thing in spiritual life which people don't realize. They allow the negative thoughts to come in, they do not have the strength to fight them, and these negative thoughts eat up the positive thoughts, so that the positivity which at first existed in your life turns to negativity and the creative ability becomes restricted.

Spiritual life is a very objective process; it is a process where you become the *drashta*, observer, every step of the way. It is not a subjectively involved process; it is an objectively involved process. Through your sadhanas, your meditations, your efforts, you have to come to the point of continuous reflection where you can protect yourself by creating positive thoughts, where you can create an armour of positive sankalpas in your life to protect yourself from the negative influences of your own mind, your senses, the world, the environment and other people.

Once the intention is clear, through reflection, and one is able to protect the budding aspiration, then the disciple has to cultivate four basic foundations which help him progress further and faster on the spiritual path. They are like the four wheels of a car which make the car move. They carry the discipleship forward.

Four wheels of discipleship

Viveka: The first wheel or aspect is acquisition of viveka. *Viveka* means knowing the difference between the appropriate and the inappropriate. This knowledge is not intellectual. It is not something that you reflect on or think about; it is more of an intuitive process of knowing the appropriate direction

to walk in. One knows instinctively, there is no intellectual gymnastics in the process of discipleship, in following the dharma of a disciple. It becomes instinctive. Viveka becomes instinctive. It has to.

Viveka cannot be acquired by forcefully sitting down to think, “Is this right, is this wrong, is this appropriate, is this inappropriate, is this good, is this bad?” If you go through head trips, you may undergo such a process. However, the knowledge has to become instinctive, one has to simply know. Of course there are many things that we know instinctively, but it is when the entire life comes within the fold of instinctive awareness of appropriateness that viveka can be said to have awakened. This is when viveka will always stop you from doing the wrong thing.

Viveka is what is used to reduce the grip and the influence of desires from the mind. Desires are reduced by knowing what is attainable and what is only one’s fantasy and ambition. If you understand that, you will find that in fact there are very few desires which are necessary to survive in life. All other desires are superficial. The core desires are very few. Therefore, when viveka awakens, one lives only the core desires, one fulfils the core desires and eliminates the others which had been added on because of the perceived need of dependency, attachments, associations, expectations, and so on.

Vairagya: The second wheel, the second foundation is *vairagya*, being totally unaffected by the sense objects, the objects of attraction which pull our attention towards them, whether a living object or an inanimate object. Vairagya is a condition of the mind; it is a state of mind cultivated through meditation and reflection. It is cultivated through viveka by knowing the difference between one’s dependencies and release of the dependencies.

Release of the dependencies on objects and people, situations and circumstances indicate one’s journey into *vairagya*. They indicate a level of *vairagya*. Vairagya is not negation; it is not leaving behind, rejecting or negating

something. Vairagya is making oneself free while everything exists around, making oneself free from their attachments, influence and association with oneself. Nothing disappears, but you become free from attachments. You become like the lotus flower which grows in water but remains untouched by the water.

When we follow the path of vairagya, then there is control over the mental attraction to pleasures. The mind which is continuously hankering for and seeking pleasures and sensual fulfilment, can be channelled. That is a major achievement of vairagya. It centres your being, stills the mental behaviour and pacifies the pranic energies so that you experience quietude and peace.

With *raga*, attachment, there is chaos in the mind, the senses and emotions. They disturb one's whole life. Yet, we cling to these attachments, we love these disturbances. When you free yourself from them, you will relate with your environment in a different way, in a more constructive, creative and dispassionate way. That is when you will become a contributor to the betterment of your environment, family, society and life.



Shat sampatti: The third wheel or foundation of discipleship is shat sampatti, equipping oneself with the right virtues, skills and strengths which allow the cultivation of spiritual awareness. There are six items of the third wheel. *Shat* means six and *sampatti* means wealth. This wealth is not material; it is one's internal wealth which illumines the consciousness, opens the doors of the heart and brings a balance in life. The aim of life is to acquire this sixfold wealth, for these are behavioural attributes which can be achieved with personal effort.

The first is *saam*, which means knowing what we want and filtering out what is unnecessary, and working towards acquiring the necessary.

Become aware of your desires and ambitions and understand whether they are beneficial for you, whether they will help in your growth and evolution or you are only looking for wish-fulfilment. In this way, by becoming the observer of the desires that continuously arise in the mind, keep giving them up, keep emptying your bag. The bag of our desires is very heavy and we keep dragging it with us every day. If you empty it a bit, you will feel much lighter.

If you look back at your life, did all your desires get fulfilled? No, you received only that which was necessary for you and that which was not necessary did not come to you. You may have had an ambition for it, but it was not fulfilled. Therefore, why allow yourself to become anxious for that which is not in your destiny?

The second item is *dam*, restraint of senses. When the senses are disturbed, then the mind, the intellect, the emotions and the pranas are all disturbed. If you can pacify the senses, then all these will also become quiet.

The third item is *uparati*, rejection, avoidance or ignoring those moments, events or objects which give temporary pleasure. If you are searching for the permanent, then you need to avoid the temporary. Remember, however, that these dharmas apply only to the jignasu and the mumukshu. They are already on track, they want to shun everything. So it

is not difficult for them to say, “Okay, I will not go in that direction. My role, my aim, my path is clear.” This attitude is reconfirmed through understanding, awareness and reflection, through the thought that “I am free from these minor attachments and attractions”. So, uparati cannot be perfected without viveka. You have to know what you need and what you don’t, and accordingly ignore that which can become a cause of bondage or disturb your peace and balance, and accept the beneficial.

The fourth is *titiksha*, cultivation of patience. You shouldn’t be praying, “God, grant me patience” and muttering under your breath, “Immediately”! Patience is a virtue of mind; it is a quality of the mind which is still. A dissipated and distracted mind does not have patience. People hide the distracted and dissipated nature of their mind by saying “I am very busy, I have to get things done.” Patience is a state of mind where the outer influences do not disturb the mental peace. You do not get swayed or carried away by the force of some thought, emotion, feeling, expectation, desire, performance or action.

Titiksha also means tolerance. Swami Sivananda used to say, “Nature throws a man into the crucible of pain in order to turn him into a sublime superman.” Nature or the divine law will place you in pain, for the effort that you put in to be free of pain makes you a superman. Your mind and heart become stronger; your shoulders also become stronger. Therefore, let not your prayer be that you are freed of suffering. Let your prayer be that your shoulders become strong, your mind and emotions become strong so that you are able to bear the problems, circumstances and pain that you are faced with. One who cannot bear with difficult circumstances is a weak person, he breaks before pain. Thus, titiksha means tolerance as well as perseverance, the ability to live through whatever circumstances one is placed in.

Tolerance and perseverance are, in fact, laws of nature. Which animal looks for an air-conditioner in summer and a heater in winter apart from man? Which animal looks for

hot water to bathe in and bottled water to drink? All other creatures live by the laws of nature; if it is hot they bear with the heat, if it is cold they bear with the cold. They do not get disturbed. It is only the human animal that is spoilt. He cannot handle heat or cold. All others follow the laws of nature, for they have *titiksha*, tolerance and patience.

When Sri Swamiji was in Munger he could not tolerate heat, so much so that he had central air-conditioning fitted in Ganga Darshan. He could not tolerate a temperature above twenty-seven degrees. But the same person sat through temperatures up to eighty and ninety degrees while performing *panchagni*. Which quality made this possible? Tolerance, patience, *titiksha*.

The fifth item is *shraddha*, cultivating and intensifying the faith. This faith is in truth, God and guru. The word *shraddha* does not apply to faith in any other object or person. It is a faith which is connected only with God, guru and truth. This is the *shraddha* that needs to be cultivated and intensified.

There is a story in the Upanishads. Once there was a drought in a kingdom. There hadn't been any rain for years. Animals were dying, the fields were dry, the earth was cracking and people were migrating to other places. The king thought, "My kingdom will become empty if there is no rain; it will become a barren land, a barren kingdom." He asked his wise men what could be done. They advised him to perform a *yajna* to please Indra, the god of rains.

The *yajna* was begun. People from all over the kingdom came to participate in it. The day the *yajna* was scheduled to culminate, a little boy reached there, holding an umbrella over his head. Everyone started to laugh at the sight, "What a mad boy, he has come with an umbrella while there is a drought! There is not a single cloud anywhere in the sky, only the scorching sun, and this boy stands with an umbrella!"

The boy replied, "Who are you laughing at? There is a drought in your kingdom and you are performing a *yajna* to invoke rain, but you do not have any faith in it. If you had faith, then you would have received the fruits of the *yajna* by

now. I have come with the faith that at a place where all the citizens of the kingdom have gathered to pray for rain, there will certainly be rain.” The moment the boy uttered these words, the sky filled with clouds and there was such torrential rain that the entire yajna venue was washed away, everyone ran hither and thither soaking wet, only this boy stood dry under his umbrella.

This is known as faith. The faith of one little boy swayed the throne of the king of gods, but the yajna performed by thousands could not achieve anything because their sentiments were not connected with it. That is the reality of our lives also, we perform actions but our sentiments are not connected with them. We may have belief, but not faith. Our faith is not aflame.

Faith is an encounter with truth. The emotion, the sentiment, the thought whose basis is truth is called faith, and that has to be intensified through viveka and protected through reflection.

The sixth item is *samadhan*, meditation on the truth, on divinity, on guru. Allowing that connection with truth to take place is *samadhan*. So, these six items constitute the third wheel. They are the six forms of internal wealth; they are qualities and attainments. If you have these six treasures in your pocket you will never experience any lack, for this is a wealth which does not diminish. It only increases if you spend it. If you spend material wealth, it diminishes but if you spend spiritual wealth, it increases.

Mumukshutva: The fourth wheel is *mumukshutva*, the strong desire for attaining freedom which makes one focused, one-pointed and determined. It is the strength of this desire that ensures that it is continuous, that there is no lessening in the intensity of the desire. In fact, the greater the intensity of the desire, the more motivated and determined you become; the more forceful and convinced you become that you are walking in the right direction.

I told you the story of the man who came to Ramakrishna Paramahansa and how he pushed him under water. He told

the man that when you feel the same kind of desperation for breaking free of the bondage of the world that you felt for coming out of the water and breathing, only then can you be liberated. It should not only be an intellectual concept, there must be intensity of desire. Philosophers hold intellectual concepts; they think, contemplate, read and understand, but their notions are limited to the intellect. Aspirants and disciples experience restlessness within their spirits to be freed, and that is called *mumukshutva*.

All these attributes which make the foundation of spiritual life are intended to ensure that you identify with your goal and do not become diverted by idle concepts, criticisms and negativities. This is a lesson which is very difficult to learn.

The virtue of listening

The next dharma of a disciple is *shravan*, listening – adhering to the *upadesha*, teachings, of the preceptor. The guru guides the disciple according to his or her spiritual need and level of understanding, commitment and evolution. Therefore it is said that any instruction received from the guru should be confined and limited only to you. It should not be divulged to others. However, people gossip about the instructions they receive to prove that they are the fortunate ones who are near the guru, that they are special and others are not special.



They say, “Guruji has told me this and this. He has given me these instructions.” So that you begin to think, “Guruji respects and likes this person very much. He is ensuring and giving direction for their spiritual upliftment and Guruji has not given me anything.” This is manipulation of the disciple. The ego of the disciple manipulates other disciples. You have all gone through that process and you still do it. Therefore I am reminding you that it is your ego manipulating other people when it projects you as special, unique, great and big, when you wish to prove that you have that contact with the guru. The scriptures and the guru say the very opposite: if the guru tells you something it is only for you.

There cannot be any comparison between two individuals. The normal tendency is to divide people in two groups, the haves and the have-nots. The have-nots always see themselves as empty and are always demanding, “The other person has this, why can’t I have it too?” That’s a very ego-oriented expression. It may be acceptable in material society, but not in a spiritual community. The aim and the intention have to be different here.

When you tell others what the guru has said to you, the energy, the shakti of that teaching becomes weak. Now the thoughts, emotions and beliefs of other people influence you, not the karma of the guru. Others have greater influence on you than the guru. Remember, the other disciples have received guru upadesha too. Let them follow their own instructions and guidance and you follow your own.

Listening is a virtue. It is a quality. If you listen, then you will understand the instructions and the intentions of the guru. If you follow every instruction and incorporate that in your life through understanding and wisdom, through viveka, then you will cover the ground that the guru is indicating to you.

There are disciples who hold up the principles and ideals of the guru-disciple relationship. They will not beat a drum when the guru gives them an instruction, but quietly go about

doing the guru's work. When you beat a drum, you will face opposition, but when you do your work quietly no one will bother you and you will be successful.

Flowing in humility

Humility is another quality that a disciple needs to cultivate. An arrogant disciple fails in life. A humble disciple succeeds in life. An arrogant and egotistical disciple, a rough disciple who has not refined the edges of the mind, the senses and emotions, will cut himself and other people. The smoothing out of the sharp edges has to take place, and that has to happen through humility.

In a storm, the big and stiff trees break very easily, but the trees which are flexible can survive the ravages of the wind and again stand upright. Humility indicates an inner flexibility. Arrogance indicates rigidity. How does a river flow? When it encounters an obstruction, does it bash itself against the rock or does it find a way around the rock? If the river is arrogant, it will dash and bash against the rock, but if the river simply wants to flow, it will go around the rock.

When you flow in humility, the softness of the heart and sentiments manifest. In rigidity, the hardness of the ego is predominant. Humility allows you to cultivate virtues; rigidity and arrogance destroy virtues. Therefore, it is a dharma of the disciple to cultivate humility in life. Without this, discipleship cannot be complete.

Reducing material needs

The next principle that a disciple must follow is *aparigraha*, non-possessiveness. Non-possessiveness does not mean that you leave behind everything that you own; it means reduce your needs to the minimum. Instead of having a closet full of thirty different kinds of suits, have just a few. When you require a new one, you can always get it from a shop.

Aparigraha means reducing the size of the closet, lessening of material needs. Our closets contain so many things which we never use, but they still hold a place of

honour and prominence for years. In the state of aparigraha you are not dependent on material possessions for survival, but instead use them to survive as necessary.

Rungs of guru-disciple relationship

To fully understand the dharma of a disciple one must also understand the basis of the relationship between guru and disciple. When the guru is there in physical form, then the physical connection creates a relationship. It can be an emotional connection, an intellectual connection or a spiritual connection. People usually begin by developing an intellectual connection first.

They go to a guru, listen to his talks, they like what the guru says and something clicks in their mind. An intellectual connection takes place with the thought, “Oh this person knows a lot, he can speak on any subject, he can define things very clearly, he can answer questions clearly.” Such clarity of communication is what stimulates you intellectually and brings you to the guru in the first place.

Thereafter, some people develop an emotional connection and dependency. The guru becomes part of their life. However, they don’t know how to manage their emotions or where to classify the guru in their life. So there is confusion. Some treat the guru as their father, some as their brother, and some even treat the guru as their husband. Nevertheless, it is a *sambandh*, a relationship which they develop. It is an emotional relationship and there is dependency in it. “You told me, but it did not happen” – that kind of a communication takes place when an emotional attachment forms with the guru.

There are a few who develop a spiritual connection with the guru. Their relationship with the guru is different. There is obedience in their relationship. People with emotional dependencies don’t obey. They talk. That is their need and release. However, people with spiritual intentions obey. And obedience to guru is a primary qualification of a disciple.



A lesson in obedience

I remember an incident from our early days with Sri Swamiji in the old ashram. One day he came out of his room with some chocolate in his hand. In those days, chocolate was super special. I am talking of the sixties; we did not have chocolates in India then. When people used to come from overseas they would bring chocolate and being the youngest, I was the prime recipient.

Sri Swamiji asked me, "*Meetha khana hai?* Do you want to eat sweets?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Okay, only on one condition, *ki tum karva bhi kha sako*. You should be able to eat the sour as well." I was stunned. I began to wonder what he meant by sour, what was he going to give me. However, I made a daring move and said, "Yes, I am ready." That was a mistake! He came out with two huge green chillies and said, "If you want chocolate, then you should be able to tolerate even the sharpness of chilli. You should be able to enjoy the sharpness of the chilli just as you enjoy the sweetness of chocolate."

I took the chillies from him and started eating and crying, eating and crying. The whole mouth was like fire. After that he gave me the chocolate. In a very simple way he taught me a big lesson. Therefore, even today, whenever I have chocolate in front of me I also see those two chillies. I learnt in that manner and it was possible because of obedience. If there was no obedience, then I would have definitely said, “No, I don’t want the chillies, I only want chocolate.”

Obedience is a necessary quality in a disciple. Sometimes, when the guru is performing ‘egodectomy’, an operation on the ego, there is a very harsh reaction from the individual. The ego does not want to be operated on. If somebody comes to you and says, “I am going to chop off your head” and takes out a knife, will you allow that person to do so? No. In the same manner, when even the guru takes out the knife and says, “I am going to cut your ego”, you don’t allow that to happen. You cannot be a disciple if you don’t allow the guru to perform the ego surgery on you. That is where the virtue of obedience becomes useful. The guru says, “Put your head down.” You reply, “Okay, it is down.” He says, “I am going to cut it.” You say, “It is yours, do as you wish.” A simple statement, a simple feeling can change the entire intention. Or you may say, “No, you can’t” and it changes the entire intention too. So, this intention is seen in the form of obedience.

In the past we used to have a person called the postman. Now, with e-mails, there are very few postmen left. However, once upon a time we all used to wait for the postman to bring our mail. The postman would carry thousands of rupees, money orders, cheques and drafts in his bag. But his duty was to deliver them dispassionately to the addressees. He did not use the money, the cheques or drafts, he did not take them for personal use. The postman was the richest, but also the poorest.

In the same manner, one has to be poor internally even if one possesses many things externally. One has to be simple and pure in intention while externally one is active and

fulfilling every guidance and direction that is received from the guru for personal and community development.

Swami Sivananda used to say that obedience to guru is superior to worship of guru. He used to say, “Do not worship the guru with garlands and by washing his feet, but by following his orders. That is the highest worship.”

Obedience to instructions must be immediate. A disciple should not sit idle waiting for the guru to tell him something. You know the saying, “An idle mind is a devil’s workshop.” Once the mind becomes the devil’s workshop, no instructions of the guru have any effect on it. Therefore, the disciple must always be in total readiness for following the orders of the guru. In fact, he should be able to anticipate what the guru wants. He should be alert and prepared. The two qualities, obedience and readiness, are necessary to create an intimate connection with the guru.

Become responsible for yourself

To cultivate the appropriate relationship with the guru it is also important that a disciple should not sit back on his problems waiting for verbal instructions of the guru. The disciple who keeps asking “What should I do now?” is the worst type. God has given you wisdom, understanding and enough grey matter to take your own decision. If you do come to the guru, don’t come with a problem, but with solutions to your problem. Say, “Swamiji, I have this problem and I have thought of these five solutions. Which one should I apply? Which is the best?” The guru may say, “Number three.” You accept that and apply it.

The guru is only endorsing what you have decided for yourself, for it is the intention of the guru to make you responsible for your own life and not to make you dependent on him for when to eat and when not to eat, when to bathe and when not to bathe, when to do mala and when not to do mala. Self-empowerment is what guru wishes in every disciple. However, such self-empowerment also requires viveka and vairagya, shat sampatti, and all the other virtues

and qualities that we have discussed. You have to strive, you have to make the effort to find your own solutions and anticipate what the guru expects from you. This is how a physical relationship is developed with the guru.

Becoming established in the dharma

In the absence of the guru, the disciple has to follow his dharma to the letter. If the guru is present, he can always tell you when you go in the wrong direction and ask you to come back, but in his absence it is the dharma which keeps you on track, not a person. To become established in this dharma, a discipline and routine has to be established in life.

Disciples who are householders and live in society should have a certain routine. For example, the chanting of the three mantras, Mahamrityunjaya, Gayatri and the Thirty-two Names of Durga, should become part of the morning routine. The chanting of Mahamrityunjaya mantra every Saturday, Sundarkand path every Poornima, practice of meditation before going to sleep, practice of asana and pranayama, performance of seva, swadhyaya and sadhana should all become part of one's routine.

If you follow these practices at home, they will touch the lives of all around you. If the whole family can participate, then the energy and the vibration created by the chanting of mantras and bhajans, performance of anushtana, pooja or japa where everyone is focused on one thought, aim and purpose, will bring peace in the life of everyone. This will rejuvenate and provide fresh inspiration.

You have to create an environment and cultivate a discipline. There has to be an integration of spiritual practices with one's daily living. You cannot be living a completely materialistic life at home and on coming to the ashram put on guru clothes and say, "I am ready for anything that you say because I am a karma sannyasin." The adjustment, the fine-tuning has to take place in your daily life also. Only then can a disciple progress on the spiritual path even in householder life and keep to the direction

shown by the guru. If he is able to do this, then all his lacks will also disappear, he will be able to fulfil all his desires in life and attain peace and joy. That is how he will live the discipleship while living in the world.

For the disciples who live in the ashram, there is a specific sadhana. You know the five M's of tantra – pancha makara. In the same way there are five S's of community living in an ashram – pancha sakara. The first S is *samarpan*. The disciple surrenders. Surrender is not just a thought: "From today I have surrendered myself to guru." You have to reflect every day whether there has been any lack in your surrender which you can remove. Analyze your day to see if your surrender was complete through all your actions and thoughts during the day.

The second is *sadhana*. The disciple makes the effort, according to the rules and traditions of the ashram or the instructions of the guru.

The third is *seva*. The disciple serves. Service incorporates the sentiment:

Naaham kartaa Hari kartaa; Hari kartaa hi kevalam.

I am not the doer, Hari is the doer; Hari is the sole doer.

Seva means that you are not acting for yourself, but for the welfare and emancipation of others. This sentiment of service purifies the consciousness.



Our Gururji tells a story from his days in Rishikesh when he was asked to serve a person suffering from leprosy. Swami Sivananda said to him, "He is Brahman, he is God and the God in him is suffering. Serve him." So, every day, Swami Satyananda and Swami Chidananda would wash his wounds, bathe him and serve him. One day, they perhaps pressed a bit too hard on his wounds, the man cried out in pain, and spat in their faces abusing them. Sri Swamiji was furious. His warrior blood could not tolerate someone spitting on him. He went straight to Swami Sivanandaji and said, "Handle your God yourself. I am not going to serve him. He does not have any manners." Swami Sivananda said, "Never mind, he does not have manners, but you do. You go on doing your work." He sent him back. Sri Swamiji says that Swami Sivananda would give such instructions or hints every now and then so that his eyes would open. He would realize where he was making a mistake, and he would be ready to rectify it immediately.

The fourth is *satsang*. The disciple fine-tunes the intellect and emotions through satsang. He imbibes new ideas and receives knowledge about his aims on the spiritual path. He gets to know the obstructions on the path, where his train is getting derailed and how to bring it back on track. There are several times when satsang enables us to bring our derailed train back on track.

The fifth is *swadhyaya*, study of oneself, awareness of oneself. Swadhyaya does not mean reading thick texts. *Swa* means the self and *adhyayan* means to study. Therefore, *swadhyaya* means study or acquiring knowledge of one's own self. This requires constant awareness, alertness and the attitude of an observer, *drashta*. This is also the basic precept of yoga. Being able to hold the attitude of an observer allows one to become a yogi from a bhogi. The *bhogi* is not the drashta, he is the enjoyer. A yogi is not an enjoyer, he is an observer. Just as sitting on this stage I can observe everyone. I can observe who is fidgeting, who is sitting stiff, who is sleeping, who is resting against the wall. In swadhyaya you have to observe yourself, you have to ask, "Did I understand

this factor or not, did I act appropriately or not, where is my fault, where did I make a mistake?" You have to watch and correct yourself.

The five S's constitute the sadhana of a disciple living in the ashram: *samarpan*, surrender; *sadhana*, practice; *seva*, service; *swadhyaya*, self-study or self-analysis; *satsang*, interacting, learning and imbibing. I am not differentiating between householders and sannyasins here; I am only talking of a disciple living in the ashram, whoever it is and whatever be the colour of their clothes. These rules apply to all. The sannyasa dharma is different; I am only talking of the disciple's dharma here.

Swami Sivananda on his disciples

There is a passage by Swami Sivananda where he speaks of his disciples. I believe this to be a very unique inscription by him. Generally, disciples praise the guru but here Swami Sivananda is praising his disciples for what they have attained, become and tried, and it is truly inspirational. This also shows that the disciples of Swami Sivananda perfected the art of discipleship. In the life of Swami Satyananda also, there are some who have perfected the art of discipleship. Those who perfect the art of discipleship become the transmitter of their guru's shakti.



This is what Swami Sivananda says about his disciples: “Sivananda’s disciple has divine qualities. He is noble, gentle and soft. He has abundant mercy, he never begs. He gives and gives and gives. He has a large heart. He mixes with all and loves everyone. He sings the Lord’s names. He does japa and meditation. He practises asana and pranayama. He is very efficient in doing service. He practises yoga of synthesis. He knows thought control.”

Now, which guru will say that his disciples know thought control? Only Swami Sivananda, and the calibre of his disciples was such that they were able to do that. Swami Sivananda continues further: “He is a practical vedantin,” meaning a person who has been able to integrate the spiritual ideas with practical action. “He does cooking, proof reading, typing, nursing, lecturing, writing, he can conduct classes, he can disseminate spiritual knowledge, yet he is simple and humble. He serves the poor with love. He has perfected tolerance for all faiths. He talks little. He is ever silent but dynamic. Work is worship for such a disciple. The spirit of service is engrained in him. He is a bhakta, a yogi and a jnani, all three combined in one.”

This is the first tribute by a guru to his disciples in human history. This tells us that the sankalpa shakti, the conviction, devotion, faith and dedication that we have seen in Sri Swamiji, is actually the result of him having perfected discipleship. He never allowed any other influence to come and disturb his one drive, his concentration on discipleship.

The highest sadhana

To perfect the disciplines of discipleship is the highest sadhana. It is easy to learn asana and meditation, pranayama, kriya yoga and kundalini yoga; it is easy to awaken the kundalini too. But it is very difficult to follow the dharma and live the lifestyle of a disciple.

I have been to many places and come across many people who believe they are gurus. For them discipleship was only a stepping stone to gurudom. Such people are deluded because

there is no such thing as gurudom. There is only discipleship and progression in discipleship. The better disciple you become, the better transmitter you become, and because you have become a better transmitter, you become a guru too.

A disciple is the transmitter of the guru's shakti. For shakti to be transmitted, the wire has to be carbon-free. If there is accumulation of carbon in the wires that carry electricity from one bulb to another, the lights will not come on. Therefore, the aim of discipleship is to remove the accumulated carbon from our wires and ensure that they are always clean so that the current of divine grace can flow continuously and constantly, and that is the dharma of a disciple.

Hari Om Tat Sat





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The Yogadrishti (Yogavision) series of satsangs consists of discourses given by Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati in Munger as part of the new phase of life that he has embarked upon since 2009.

The dharma of a disciple was the theme of the satsangs given in August 2010 at Ganga Darshan, after Swamiji returned from Guru Poornima celebrations at Rikhiapeeth. Beginning with insightful reflections on the guru tattwa, Swamiji leads us to assess where we stand as a disciple, our character and its strengths and weaknesses, and how we can move up from where we are by fortifying our base and acquiring the necessary attributes. The satsangs answer a fundamental spiritual question: what is the highest truth that an adherent of the guru-disciple tradition must live by.



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